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J.A. DUBOIS

Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies

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By

ABBE J. A. DUBOIS

Translated by

HENRY K. BEAUCHAMP

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BY THE

ABBÉ J. A. DUBOIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE AUTHOR'S LATER FRENCH MS. AND EDITED WITH NOTES, CORRECTIONS, AND BIOGRAPHY

BY

HENRY K. BEAUCHAMP

WITH A PREFATORY NOTE BY THE RIGHT HON. F. MAX MULLER AND A PORTRAIT

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PREFATORY NOTE

It is difficult to believe that the Abbé Dubois, the author of *Mœurs, Institutions et Cérémonies des Peuples de l'Inde*, died only in 1848. By his position as a scholar and as a student of Indian subjects, he really belongs to a period previous to the revival of Sanskrit studies in India, as inaugurated by Wilkins, Sir William Jones, and Colebrooke. I had no idea, when in 1846 I was attending in Paris the lectures of Eugène Burnouf at the *Collége de France*, that the old Abbé was still living and in full activity as *Directeur des Missions Étrangères*, and I doubt whether even Burnouf himself was aware of his existence in Paris. The Abbé belongs really to the eighteenth century, but as there is much to be learnt even from such men as Roberto de' Nobili, who went to India in 1606, from H. Roth, who was much consulted by Kircher in his *China Illustrata* (1667), and others, so again the eighteenth century was by no means devoid of eminent students of Sanskrit, of Indian religion, and Indian subjects in general. It is true that in our days their observations and researches possess chiefly a historical interest, but they are by no means to be neglected. They make us see how the acquaintance of

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European scholars with India began, and under what circumstances the first steps were taken by these pioneers, chiefly missionaries, towards acquiring a knowledge of the ancient language of India, Sanskrit, and through it, towards gaining an acquaintance with one of the most interesting peoples and one of the richest and most original literatures of the world. The reports sent from India by the Père Cœurdoux (1767), and published by Barthélemy in the *Memoirs of the French Academy*, the letters of the Père Calmette (1733), and of the Père Pons (1740), are full of curious information, anticipating on many points the later discoveries of Sir William Jones and other members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, founded in 1784. It should be remembered also that the first Sanskrit grammar was published at Rome in 1790 by Paolino de S. Bartolommeo, four years before the death of Sir William Jones (1746–1794).

The Abbe Dubois, though born about 1770 and therefore considerably the junior of Sir William Jones, belonged by his place in the history of Sanskrit scholarship to the period that came to an end with the beginnings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal which had been founded by Sir William Jones in 1784 Not must it be forgotten that while the real revival of Sanskrit studies took piace in Bengal, the Abbe Dubois spent the whole of his life in the Dekhan and in the Madras Presidency. He was therefore, as may be seen by his translation of the *Pancha-tantra*, under the title of *Le Panchatantra ou les cinq ruses*. Fables du Brahme Vichnou Sarma; Aventures de Paramarta et autres contes, le tout traduit pour la premiere fois, Paris, 1826, a Tamil far more than a Sanskrit scholar, and well acquainted with Tamil literature, which

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hitherto has been far too much neglected by students of Indian literature, philosophy, and religion.

Though little is known of the Abbé Dubois' life beyond the fact that he lived retired from the world, and retired even from his fellow-labourers and a stranger, it would seem, to the researches which were carried on all around him by the devoted and enthusiastic scholars of Sanskrit literature in France, England, and Germany, his principal book, *Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India, and of their Institutions, religious and civil*, published both in French and in English, has always continued to be read and to be quoted with respect, as containing the views of an eye-witness, of a man singularly free from prejudice and of a scholar with sufficient knowledge, if not of Sanskrit, yet of Tamil, both literary and spoken, to be able to enter into the views of the natives, to understand their manners and customs, and to make allowance for many of their superstitious opinions and practices, as mere corruptions of an originally far more rational and intelligent form of religion and philosophy. Few men who were real scholars have hitherto undertaken to tell us what they saw of India and its inhabitants during a life-long residence in the country, and in spite of the great opportunities that India offers to intelligent and observant travellers, we know far less of the actual life of India than of that of Greece and Rome. There are few men now left who, like the Abbé Dubois, have actually been present at the burning of widows, or who can give us, as he does, the direct reports of eye-witnesses who saw a king burnt with two of his queens joining hands on the burning pile over the corpse of their husband. In the south these Suttees were far less frequent than in Bengal, where in

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the year 1817 no less than 706 cases of Suttee had been officially reported, and where this practice had at last to be put down by the law during the Governor-Generalship of Lord William Bentinck (1825–1835), thanks chiefly to the active exertions and the moral influence of Ram Mohun Roy.

As a trustworthy authority on the state of India from 1792 to 1823 the Abbé Dubois' work will always retain its value, and in its final and complete form now offered to the public it will be welcome not only to Sanskrit scholars, but to all who take an intelligent interest in that wonderful country. As the Abbé went to India as a missionary, and was a man remarkably free from theological prejudices, missionaries in particular will read his volume with interest and real advantage.

F. M. M.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THOUGH Europeans have possessed settlements in India for more than three centuries, it is only within recent times that authentic details have been obtained with respect to the people who dwell in this vast country and whose ancient civilization, methods of government, manners, creeds, and customs are nevertheless so well worthy of notice. It is impossible to doubt for a moment that science and art flourished amongst these nations at an epoch when our most civilized countries of the West were still plunged in the dark abyss of ignorance. The various forms of their institutions, both political and social; their knowledge of mathematics, especially of astronomy; their systems of metaphysics and ethics: all of these had long ago made the people of India famous far beyond their own borders; while the renown of Hindu philosophers had reached even Europe. The many ill-informed and often contradictory narratives about India which have been published in modern times have deservedly fallen into discredit. Yet, it must be admitted, some good work has been done by certain Literary Societies that have of recent years been established in India, the members of which, possessing access to original sources of information, have begun to survey with a more critical eye these records of divine and human knowledge, whose depositaries have hitherto guarded them with zealous care behind a veil of mystery. Without doubt the members of these Societies, distinguished as they mostly are by their erudition, will continue to devote special study to the languages of the country and to make abundant use of the sources of information open to them. Yet, it must be confessed, the information which we possess about the people of India is very meagre compared with that which

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it is most important for us to acquire. The ancient history of their country is, for one thing, enshrouded in chimera and fable, and, unfortunately, such incoherence and such obscurity prevail in their written records, which are our only means of really getting at the truth, that it is not too much to presume that we shall never succeed in throwing proper light on all this mass of absurdities. The most popular and best known of these written records are the *Râmâyana*, the *Bhâgavata*, and the *Mahâbhârata*[1]; but the information which their authors give about the dates, events, and duration of the different dynasties; about the heroes of India and their prowess in war; about the various revolutions which occurred in the country and the circumstances which led to them; about the beginnings of Hindu polity; about the discoveries and progress in science and art; in a word, about all the most interesting features of history,—all information of this kind is, as it were, buried amid a mass of fable and superstition.

My readers will see in the following pages to what extremes the people of India carry their belief in and love for the marvellous. Their first historians were in reality poets, who seem to have decided that they could not do better than compose their poems in the spirit of the people for whom they were writing. That is to say, they were guided solely by the desire to please their readers, and accordingly clothed Truth in such a grotesque garb as to render it a mere travesty from an historical point of view. The Indian Muse of History thus became a kind of magician whose wand performed wonders. The successors of these first poet-historians were actuated by the same motives, and even thought that it added to their own glory to improve on their predecessors and to surpass them in the absurdity of their fictions.

While waiting for inquirers, more skilful than myself, to find a way through this labyrinth, which to me is absolutely inextricable, I offer to the public a large number of authentic records which I have carefully collected, and which, for the most part, contain particulars that are either unknown or only partially known, in the hope that they will be found not altogether devoid of interest. I believe, at any rate, that they will be acknow-

[1] These are the three great Hindu Epic poems. Vide Part II, Chapter XXII, and Part III, Chapter V.

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ledged to contain some useful materials for future savants who may undertake a complete and methodical treatise on the people of India, a task which is far beyond my powers and which moreover I could not possibly have laid upon myself, seeing that I was without literary aids of any kind during my long and absolute seclusion amongst the natives of the country.

In this new edition the contents of my first MS. have been carefully revised and corrected. They have, moreover, been considerably augmented by many curious details which did not appear in the original document. At the same time, I have made no substantial changes in the order and classification of the contents. Five or six additional chapters, and a number of corrections and improvements in the body of the work, constitute all the difference between this and the earlier draft. Since the English translation of the latter appeared, great political changes have taken place amongst the people whose manners and institutions I have sketched; but, as these changes were not taken into account in my original plan, I have not considered myself bound, when referring to them, to go beyond the limits which I prescribed for myself in the first instance. In all that I say about the administration of the Peninsula my readers will at once perceive that I have in mind the Governments preceding that which has now made itself master of the destinies of the Indian people, and which has freed them from the iron yoke of a long series of arbitrary rulers, under whose oppression they groaned during so many centuries.

This colossal dominion, which a European Government has succeeded in establishing in India without any very great difficulty and without any very violent shocks, has filled the people of India with admiration, and has fully convinced the Powers of Asia of the great superiority of Europeans in every way, and more especially in the art of subjugating and governing nations.

We too may well wonder at a conquest which appears indeed almost miraculous. It is difficult for us to imagine how a mere handful of men managed to coerce into submissive obedience a hundred millions of people, scattered over a country which extends for twenty-four degrees of latitude north and south and for nearly the same number of degrees east and west.

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And it is still more difficult to understand how these few men are able to maintain within the bounds of duty and subordination a population whose creeds, habits, customs, and manner of life are so absolutely different from their own.

Yet one will have little or no difficulty in accounting for such a phenomenon if one examines on the one hand the spirit, character, and institutions of the people governed, and on the other the system adopted by those governing them. The people of India have always been accustomed to bow their heads beneath the yoke of a cruel and oppressive despotism, and moreover, strange to say, have always displayed mere indifference towards those who have forced them to it. Little cared they whether the princes under whom they groaned were of their own country or from foreign lands[1]. The frequent vicissitudes that befell those in power were hardly noticed by their subjects. Never did the fall of one of these despots cause the least regret; never did the elevation of another cause the least joy. Hard experience had taught the Hindus to disregard not only the hope of better times but the fear of worse. The fable of the ass urged by its master to escape from approaching robbers is most appropriate to these people. They have always considered themselves lucky enough if their religious and domestic institutions were left untouched by those who by good fortune or force of arms had got hold of the reins of government.

The European Power which is now established in India is, properly speaking, supported neither by physical force nor by moral influence. It is a piece of huge, complicated machinery, moved by springs which have been arbitrarily adapted to it. Under the supremacy of the Brahmins the people of India hated their government, while they cherished and respected their rulers; under the supremacy of Europeans they hate and despise their rulers from the bottom of their hearts, while they cherish and respect their government. And here I would remark that the rule of all the Hindu princes, and often that of the Mahomedans, was, properly speaking, Brahminical rule, since all posts of confidence were held by Brahmins.

If it be possible to ameliorate the condition of the people of

[1] This is illustrated in the familiar proverb, 'What matters it whether Rama reigns or the Rakshasa (Ravana) reigns?'—Ed.

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India I am convinced that this desirable result will be attained under the new *régime*, whatever may be said by detractors who are ready to find fault with everything. Whatever truth indeed there may be in the prejudiced charges, engendered by ignorance and interested motives, which are brought against the new order of things, and which are perhaps inseparable from every great administration, I for one cannot believe that a nation so eminently distinguished for its beneficent and humane principles of government at home, and above all for its impartial justice to all classes alike — I for one cannot believe that this nation will ever be blind enough to compromise its own noble character by refusing participation in these benefits to a subject people which is content to live peaceably under its sway.

At the same time I venture to predict that it will attempt in vain to effect any very considerable changes in the social condition of the people of India, whose character, principles, customs, and ineradicable conservatism will always present insurmountable obstacles. To make a people happy, it is essential that they themselves should desire to be made happy and should co-operate with those who are working for their happiness. Now, the people of India, it appears to me, neither possess this desire nor are anxious to co-operate to this end. Every reform which is obviously devised for their well-being they obstinately push aside if it is likely in the least degree to disturb their manner of living, their most absurd prejudice, or their most puerile custom.

Nevertheless the justice and prudence which the present rulers display in endeavouring to make these people less unhappy than they have been hitherto; the anxiety they manifest in increasing their material comfort; above all, the inviolable respect which they constantly show for the customs and religious beliefs of the country; and, lastly, the protection they afford to the weak as well as to the strong, to the Brahmin as to the Pariah, to the Christian, to the Mahomedan, and to the Pagan: all these have contributed more to the consolidation of their power than even their victories and conquests.

There is another circumstance no less remarkable which may account for the stability and power of this Government, and that is the sagacity with which it has chosen persons to fill

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places of responsibility under it. For uprightness of character, education, and ability it would be hard to find a body of public servants better capable of filling with zeal and distinction the offices, more or less important, that are entrusted to them.

During the thirty years spent by me in the various provinces of India I have had the honour of knowing a very large number of these public servants, and it gives me much pleasure to testify here to the many excellent qualities which I have almost invariably found them to possess. Cast away, as it were, on the shores of this foreign land at a time when my own country was a prey to all the horrors of a disastrous revolution, I never failed to receive from them the warmest hospitality. Even when a desperate war might well have given rise to bitter prejudice against everything French, I never failed to find amongst the rulers of India many friends and benefactors. Would that the fear of offending their modesty did not forbid my mentioning here in testimony of my regard the names of many of them equally distinguished for their high merit and for their commanding position. But even at the risk of appearing indiscreet I cannot pass over one of them in silence. I cannot, in the fullness of my gratitude, abstain from mentioning publicly how much I owe to the Honourable Mr. Arthur Henry Cole, the British Resident in Mysore. This worthy official, whose public and domestic virtues, inexhaustible charity, and polished manners are recognized throughout the whole of the Peninsula, has found a fitting recognition of his fine character in the love and respect of the natives subject to his jurisdiction, who with one voice have hailed him as the *father of their country*. All that he has done for the natives of Mysore will be long remembered by them. As regards myself, nothing can equal the many acts of kindness which he has heaped upon me during my stay of twenty years in the province subject to his authority. If these words ever reach him I trust that he will recognize in them the genuine feelings of respect and gratitude which I shall ever cherish towards him.

One might accuse me of blind prejudice if I went so far as to affirm that everybody vested with authority in this land was without exception worthy of high praise. The fact is, we do not live in an age of miracles. It is probable, it is even certain, that not all of those entrusted with the supervision of this huge

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political machinery are influenced by the purest motives. And yet the system of watchful control is such that any man who allows himself to be tempted from the path of duty by greed and avarice cannot hope to hide his corrupt doings from the eye of superior authority for any length of time. Every subject of the dominant power, however humble he may be, is allowed the right of free petition; and this is sufficient guarantee that any well-founded grievances will be set right, any well-proven abuses put a stop to.

It has been asserted that any great power based neither on a display of force nor on the affection and esteem of subject races is bound sooner or later to topple under its own weight. I am far from sharing this opinion altogether. The present Government occupies a position in which it has little or nothing to fear from extraneous disturbance. True it is that like all empires it is subject to possible chances of internal dissension, military revolt, and general insurrection. But I firmly believe that nothing of this sort will happen to it so long as it maintains amongst its troops the perfect discipline and the sense of comfort which at present exist, and so long as it does all in its power to make its yoke scarcely perceptible by permitting its subjects every freedom in the exercise of their social and religious practices[1].

It is the poverty of the country which in my opinion gives most cause for apprehension—a poverty which is accompanied by the most extraordinary supineness on the part of the people themselves. The question is, will a Government which is rightly determined to be neither unjust nor oppressive be able always to find within the borders of this immense empire means sufficient to enable it to meet the heavy expenses of its administration[2]? But, after all, God alone can foretell the destiny of Governments!

But I must return to the contents of my work. During my long sojourn in India I never let slip any opportunity of collecting materials and particulars of all sorts. My information

[1] Students of Indian History will bear witness to the wisdom of the Abbé's remarks, which subsequent history has so strikingly tended to confirm.—Ed.

[2] Within these few lines the Abbé, with extraordinary insight, has embodied the great problem of British administration in India.—Ed.

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has been drawn partly from the books which are held in highest estimation amongst the people of India and partly from such scattered records as fell by chance into my hands and contained facts upon which I could thoroughly rely. But in regard to the majority of the materials which I now offer to the public I am chiefly dependent on my own researches, having lived in close and familiar intercourse with persons of every caste and condition of life. Probably many Europeans settled in India would have been more capable than myself of performing the same task; but I may be permitted to doubt whether there has been any person more favourably situated for gleaning information or more zealous in his pursuit of knowledge. I had no sooner arrived amongst the natives of India than I recognized the absolute necessity of gaining their confidence. Accordingly I made it my constant rule to live as they did. I adopted their style of clothing, and I studied their customs and methods of life in order to be exactly like them. I even went so far as to avoid any display of repugnance to the majority of their peculiar prejudices. By such circumspect conduct I was able to ensure a free and hearty welcome from people of all castes and conditions, and was often favoured of their own accord with the most curious and interesting particulars about themselves.

In publishing these records of my researches I have no wish to aspire to literary fame. I have noted down just what I saw, just what I heard, just what I read. I have aimed only at simplicity and accuracy. If I have here and there ventured to give a few opinions and conjectures of my own, I beg that my readers will not suppose that I have done so out of vanity and with the object of posing as a profound scholar, which I am not. However severely critics may attack my work, they cannot be more keenly aware of its imperfections than myself. I know well that my researches might have been presented in a form more agreeable, more animated, and more methodical. There are many matters mentioned by me which called for more profound discussion, clearer criticism, and wider treatment. A more correct and more brilliant style would have concealed the dryness of certain details. But I beg indulgent readers to consider the circumstances which have prevented me from satisfying such conditions. Separated as I was for more than thirty years from

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all intercourse with my fellow-countrymen, communicating only rarely and occasionally with Europeans, passing my whole life in villages in the midst of rude cultivators of the soil, deprived of all the advantages which great cities offer to those writers who are clever enough to profit by the labours of their predecessors, prevented from invoking the aid and counsel of intelligent men, having no books to refer to except my Bible and a few writings without merit and without interest which chance rather than choice put into my hands, compelled indeed to rely upon the imperfect recollection of what I had read and learned in my youth: with all these disadvantages it was only to be expected that my work would be defective. Nevertheless I am persuaded that the notes which I have taken so much trouble to collect will afford some useful material to others more favourably situated than myself; and I have therefore no hesitation in offering them to the public.

There is one motive which above all others has influenced my determination. It struck me that a faithful picture of the wickedness and incongruities of polytheism and idolatry would by its very ugliness help greatly to set off the beauties and perfections of Christianity. It was thus that the Lacedaemonians placed drunken slaves in the sight of their children in order to inspire the latter with a horror of intemperance.

There is every reason to believe that the true God was well known to the people of India at the time when they first banded themselves together as a nation. For who can doubt that our blessed religion was originally that of the whole world? Who can doubt that it would have exercised universal sway from the days of Adam to the end of time if its original form as established by God Himself and its primitive traditions had been carefully respected? Unfortunately human passion gained the upper hand. Whole nations were corrupted, and men made for themselves a religion more suited to the depravity of their own hearts. Nevertheless, what has now become of the innumerable deities of Greece and Rome? They have vanished like an empty, transitory dream. Let us pray that the Almighty may be pleased to allow the torch of Truth to illumine the countries watered by the Ganges! Doubtless the time is still far distant when the stubborn Hindu will open his eyes to the light and tear himself away from his dark superstitions; but

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let us not despair, a day will come when the standard of the Cross will be flying over the temples of India as it flies now over her strong places [1].

Certain statements to be found in my work will seem almost incredible to my readers. All that I can say is that I have set down nothing without assuring myself most carefully of its truthfulness. For the rest, my readers will feel much less doubt as to the accuracy of these statements when they have learned to recognize how eminently original the people of India are in their manners and customs. So original are they, indeed, that one may search in vain for types, or anything approaching to types, of them amongst other nations of the world, ancient or modern.

With regard to caste usages I must warn my readers that my researches were confined to the provinces south of the Kistna River, where I passed most of the time that I was in India. I cannot say whether these usages are the same to the north of that river and in Hindustan proper; but if any differences there be it is probable that they exist only in form. There is no place in India which does not possess certain customs and practices of its own, and it would be impossible to give descriptions of them all. Fundamentally, however, caste constitutions are the same everywhere. Furthermore, however many the shades of difference between the various castes, however diversified the customs that control them, only slight differences exist between the various forms of religious belief. Indeed, the religion of the Hindus may be said to form a common centre for the numerous elements which constitute Hinduism in its widest sense. Moreover there is a certain general uniformity of rule and practice in everyday social matters, which compels one to look upon the different masses of the population as belonging in reality to one big family. Nevertheless, whatever I may say in the following pages must not be given a too general meaning, for it is hardly necessary to point out that in such a huge

[1] Yet even now the number of Christians in India is, comparatively speaking, small. They form about ·75 per cent. of the whole population, and nearly 75 per cent. of the total are found in Madras, Travancore, Hyderabad, Mysore, and Cochin. And concerning the native Christians of these parts a distinguished and much-travelled member of the Civil Service recently remarked, 'Their Christianity, as I have seen it, too often breathes but little of the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.'—ED.

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country there are many peculiarities of language and custom which are purely local in character. For instance, a careful observer would see less resemblance between a Tamil and a Canarese, between a Telugu and a Mahratta, than between a Frenchman and an Englishman, an Italian and a German.

Even when they migrate or travel from one province to another, natives of India never throw off what I may call the characteristics of their natal soil. In the midst of their new surroundings they invariably preserve their own language and customs.

On the Malabar coast one may count five different tribes, established from time immemorial, within a hundred leagues of territory north and south. They are the *Nairs* or *Naimars*, the *Kurgas* or *Kudagas*, the *Tulus*, the *Konkanis*, and the *Kanaras*. Although amalgamated in some degree, each of these tribes still preserves to the present day the language and mode of life peculiar to the place from which it originally sprang. The same thing may be remarked throughout the Peninsula, but especially in the Tamil country and in Mysore, where many families of Telugus are to be found whose ancestors were obliged for various reasons to quit their native soil and migrate thither. The remembrance of their original birthplace is engraved on the hearts of these Telugus, and they always carefully avoid following the peculiar usages of their adoptive country. Yet they are invariably treated with the most perfect tolerance. Indeed, every native of India is quite free to take up his abode wherever it may seem good to him. Nobody will quarrel with him for living his own life, speaking what language he pleases, or following whatever customs he is used to. All that is asked of him is that he should conform generally to the accustomed rules of decorum recognized in the neighbourhood.

The Brahmin caste has seemed to me to merit particular attention. It is the caste whose rules and practices are most scrupulously observed. All persons who have visited India or who have any notion of the character of the Brahmins, of the high esteem in which they hold themselves, and of the distant *hauteur* with which they treat the common people, will be able to appreciate the difficulties which anybody must encounter who would become intimate, or even acquainted, with these

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proud personages. The hate and contempt which they cherish against all strangers, and especially against Europeans; the jealous inquietude with which they hide from the profane the mysteries of their religious cult; the records of their learning; the privacy of their homes: all these form barriers between themselves and their observers which it is almost impossible to pass [1].

Nevertheless, by much diplomacy and perseverance I have succeeded in surmounting most of the obstacles which have turned back so many others before me. I therefore trust that the minute particulars which I have given in this work will be accepted as a record of all that it is useful to know about the religious ceremonies and ritual of the Hindus.

I have divided this work into three parts. The first presents a general purview of society in India, and contains details concerning all classes of its inhabitants. In the second part I have discussed the Brahmins more particularly, both in themselves and in relation to other castes. The third part contains particulars of the religious tenets and deities of India.

Among the papers which are published separately, as Appendices, there is one on the Jains which I hope will be read not without interest. These schismatics are to be found in great numbers in the western provinces of the Peninsula, and especially in Malabar, where they represent the majority of the population. They form a perfectly distinct class, and differ widely from the Brahmins in many essential points of doctrine and practice.

[1] Since the Abbé wrote, vast stores of Brahminical lore have been brought to light by enterprising savants in Europe, especially by Professor Max Müller.—Ed.

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PART I

GENERAL VIEW OF SOCIETY IN INDIA, AND GENERAL REMARKS ON THE CASTE SYSTEM

CHAPTER I

Division and Subdivision of Castes.—Castes peculiar to Certain Provinces.—Particular Usages of some Castes.—Division of Castes founded on Parentage.—Subordination of Castes.—Outward Signs of certain Castes.—Division of Caste-groups into Right-hand and Left-hand.

THE word *caste* is derived from the Portuguese, and is used in Europe to designate the different tribes or classes into which the people of India are divided[1]. The most ordinary classification, and at the same time the most ancient, divides them into four main castes. The first and most distinguished of all is that of *Brahmana*, or *Brahmins*; the second in rank is that of *Kshatriyas*, or *Rajahs*; the third the *Vaisyas*, or *Landholders* and *Merchants*; and the fourth the *Sudras*, or *Cultivators* and *Menials*.

The functions proper to each of these four main castes are: for Brahmins, priesthood and its various duties; for Kshatriyas, military service in all its branches; for Vaisyas, agriculture, trade, and cattle-breeding; and for Sudras, general servitude.

[1] The Sanskrit word is *Varna* = colour, thus showing that upon the difference of colour between the Aryan Brahmins and the aboriginal inhabitants the distinction of caste was originally founded.—POPE.

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But I will describe more fully hereafter the several social distinctions which are attached to each of them.

Each of the four main castes is subdivided into many others, the number of which it is difficult to determine because the subdivisions vary according to locality, and a sub-caste existing in one province is not necessarily found in another.

Amongst the Brahmins of the south of the Peninsula, for example, there are to be found three or four principal divisions, and each of these again is subdivided into at least twenty others. The lines of demarcation between them are so well defined as to prevent any kind of union between one sub-caste and another, especially in the case of marriage.

The Kshatriyas and Vaisyas are also split up into many divisions and subdivisions. In Southern India neither Kshatriyas nor Vaisyas are very numerous; but there are considerable numbers of the former in Northern India. Howbeit, the Brahmins assert that the true Kshatriya caste no longer exists, and that those who pass for such are in reality a debased race.

The Sudra caste is divided into most sub-castes. Nobody in any of the provinces where I have lived has ever been able to inform me as to the exact number and names of them. It is a common saying, however, that there are 18 chief sub-castes, which are again split up into 108 lesser divisions.

The Sudras are the most numerous of the four main castes. They form, in fact, the mass of the population, and added to the Pariahs, or Outcastes, they represent at least nine-tenths of the inhabitants. When we consider that the Sudras possess almost a monopoly of the various forms of artisan employment and manual labour, and that in India no person can exercise two professions at a time, it is not surprising that the numerous individuals who form this main caste are distributed over so many distinct branches.

However, there are several classes of Sudras that exist only in certain provinces. Of all the provinces that I lived in, the Dravidian, or Tamil, country is the one where the ramifications of caste appeared to me most numerous. There are not nearly so many ramifications of caste in Mysore or the Deccan. Nowhere in these latter provinces have I come

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across castes corresponding to those which are known in the Tamil country under the names of *Moodelly*, *Agambady*, *Nattaman*, *Totiyar*, *Udaiyan*, *Valeyen*, *Upiliyen*, *Pallen*, and several others [1].

It should be remarked, however, that those Sudra castes which are occupied exclusively in employments indispensable to all civilized societies are to be found everywhere under names varying with the languages of different localities. Of such I may cite, amongst others, the gardeners, the shepherds, the weavers, the *Panchalas* (the five castes of artisans, comprising the carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, founders, and in general all workers in metals), the manufacturers and venders of oil, the fishermen, the potters, the washermen, the barbers, and some others. All these form part of the great main caste of Sudras; but the different castes of cultivators hold the first rank and disdainfully regard as their inferiors all those belonging to the professions just mentioned, refusing to eat with those who practise them.

In some districts there are castes which are not to be met with elsewhere, and which may be distinguished by peculiarities of their own. I am not aware, for example, that the very remarkable caste of *Nairs*, whose women enjoy the privilege of possessing several husbands, is to be found anywhere but in Travancore [2]. Amongst these same people, again, is another distinct caste called *Namburi*, which observes one abominable and revolting custom. The girls of this caste are usually married before the age of puberty; but if a girl who has arrived at an age when the signs of puberty are apparent happens to die before having had intercourse with a man, caste custom rigorously demands that the inanimate corpse of the deceased shall be subjected to a monstrous connexion. For this purpose the girl's parents are obliged to procure by a present of money some wretched fellow willing to consummate such a disgusting

[1] *Moodelly*, 'chief man' or highly respectable trader. *Agambady*, he who performs menial offices in temples or palaces. *Nattaman*, a caste of cultivators. *Totiyar*, a caste of labourers. *Udaiyan*, a potter. *Valeyen*, a fisherman. *Upiliyen*, salt manufacturer. *Pallen*, agriculturist.—ED.

[2] It would be more correct to say West Coast. Moreover, although Nair women are commonly described as polyandrous, they are not really so, for though they enjoy the privilege of changing their husbands, they do not entertain more than one husband *at a time*.—ED.

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form of marriage: for were the marriage not consummated the family would consider itself dishonoured [1].

The caste of *Kullars*, or robbers, who exercise their calling as an hereditary right, is found only in the Marava country, which borders on the coast, or fishing, districts. The rulers of the country are of the same caste. They regard a robber's occupation as discreditable neither to themselves nor to their fellow castemen, for the simple reason that they consider robbery a duty and a right sanctioned by descent. They are not ashamed of their caste or occupation, and if one were to ask of a *Kullar* to what people he belonged he would coolly answer, 'I am a robber!' This caste is looked upon in the district of Madura, where it is widely diffused, as one of the most distinguished among the Sudras.

There exists in the same part of the country another caste, known as the *Totiyars*, in which brothers, uncles, nephews, and other near relations are all entitled to possess their wives in common.

In Eastern Mysore there is a caste called *Morsa-Okkala-Makkalu*, in which, when the mother of a family gives her eldest daughter in marriage, she is obliged to submit to the amputation of two joints of the middle finger and of the ring finger of the right hand. And if the bride's mother be dead the bridegroom's mother, or in default of her the mother of the nearest relative, must submit to this cruel mutilation [2].

Many other castes exist in various districts which are distinguished by practices no less foolish than those above mentioned.

Generally speaking, there are few castes which are not

[1] Whatever may have been the case in the days of the Abbé, these customs no longer exist. In regard to this, Mr. W. Logan, in his *Manual of Malabar*, writes thus: 'To make tardy retribution—if it deserves such a name—to women who die unmarried, the corpse, it is said, cannot be burnt till a *tali* string (the Hindu equivalent of the wedding-ring of Europe) is tied round the neck of the corpse, while lying on the funeral pile, by a competent relative. Nambutiris are exceedingly reticent in regard to their funeral ceremonies and observances, and the Abbé Dubois' account of what was related to him regarding other observances at this strange funeral-pile marriage requires confirmation.'—ED.

[2] This custom is no longer observed; instead of the two fingers being amputated, they are now merely bound together and thus rendered unfit for use.—ED.

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distinguished by some special custom quite apart from the peculiar religious usages and ceremonies which the community may prescribe to guarantee or sanction civil contracts. In the cut and colour of their clothes and in the style of wearing them, in the peculiar shape of their jewels and in the manner in which they are displayed on various parts of the person, the various castes have many rules, each possessing its own significance. Some observe rites of their own in their funeral and marriage ceremonies: others possess ornaments which they alone may use, or flags of certain colours, for various ceremonies, which no other caste may carry. Yet, absurd as some of these practices may appear, they arouse neither contempt nor dislike in members of other castes which do not admit them. The most perfect toleration is the rule in such matters. As long as a caste conforms on the whole to the recognized rules of decorum it is permitted to follow its own bent in its domestic affairs without interruption, and no other castes ever think of blaming or even criticizing it, although its practices may be in direct opposition to their own.

There are, nevertheless, some customs which, although scrupulously observed in the countries where they exist, are so strongly opposed to the rules of decency and decorum generally laid down that they are spoken of with disapprobation and sometimes with horror by the rest of the community. The following may be mentioned among practices of this nature.

In the interior of Mysore, women are obliged to accompany the male inmates of the house whenever the latter retire for the calls of nature, and to cleanse them with water afterwards. This practice, which is naturally viewed with disgust in other parts of the country, is here regarded as a sign of good breeding and is most carefully observed [1].

The use of intoxicating liquors, which is condemned by respectable people throughout almost the whole of India, is nevertheless permitted amongst the people who dwell in the jungles and hill tracts of the West Coast. There the leading castes of Sudras, not excepting even the women and children, openly drink arrack, the brandy of the country, and toddy, the fermented juice of the palm. Each inhabitant in those parts

[1] If this custom ever existed, the spread of education has effectually put a stop to it.—ED.

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has his toddy-dealer, who regularly brings him a daily supply and takes in return an equivalent in grain at harvest time.

The Brahmin inhabitants of these parts are forbidden a like indulgence under the penalty of exclusion from caste. But they supply the defect by opium, the use of which, although universally interdicted elsewhere, is nevertheless considered much less objectionable than the use of intoxicating liquors.

The people of these damp and unhealthy districts have no doubt learnt by experience that a moderate use of spirits or opium is necessary for the preservation of health, and that it protects them, partially at any rate, against the ill effects of the malarious miasma amidst which they are obliged to live. Nothing indeed but absolute necessity could have induced them to contravene in this way one of the most venerable precepts of Hindu civilization.

The various classes of Sudras who dwell in the hills of the Carnatic observe amongst their domestic regulations a practice as peculiar as it is disgusting. Both men and women pass their lives in a state of uncleanness and never wash their clothes. When once they have put on cloths fresh from the looms of the weavers they do not leave them off until the material actually drops from rottenness. One can imagine the filthy condition of these cloths after they have been worn day and night for several months soaked with perspiration and soiled with dirt, especially in the case of the women, who continually use them for wiping their hands, and who never change their garments until wear and tear have rendered them absolutely useless.

Yet this revolting habit is most religiously observed, and, if anybody were so rash as to wash but once in water the cloths with which he or she is covered, exclusion from caste would be the inevitable consequence. This custom, however, may be due to the scarcity of water, for in this part of the country there are only a few stagnant ponds, which would very soon be contaminated if all the inhabitants of a village were allowed to wash their garments in them.

Many religious customs are followed only by certain sects, and are of purely local character. For instance, it is only in the districts of Western Mysore that I have observed Monday in each week kept nearly in the same way as Sunday is

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among Christians. On that day the villagers abstain from ordinary labour, and particularly from such as, like ploughing, requires the use of oxen and kine. Monday is consecrated to Basava (the Bull), and is set apart for the special worship of that deity. Hence it is a day of rest for their cattle rather than for themselves.

This practice, however, is not in vogue except in the districts where the *Lingayats*, or followers of Siva[1], predominate. This sect pays more particular homage to the Bull than the rest of the Hindus; and, in the districts where it predominates, not only keeps up the strict observance of the day thus consecrated to the divinity, but forces other castes to follow its example.

Independently of the divisions and subdivisions common to all castes, one may further observe in each caste close family alliances cemented by intermarriage. Hindus of good family avoid as far as possible intermarriage with families outside their own circle. They always aim at marrying their children into the families which are already allied to them, and the nearer the relationship the more easily are marriages contracted. A widower is remarried to his deceased wife's sister, an uncle marries his niece, and a first cousin his first cousin. Persons so related possess an exclusive privilege of intermarrying, upon the ground of such relationship; and, if they choose, they can prevent any other union and enforce their own preferential right, however old, unsuited, infirm, and poor they may be[2].

In this connexion, however, several strange and ridiculous distinctions are made. An uncle may marry the daughter of his sister, but in no case may he marry the daughter of his brother. A brother's children may marry a sister's children, but the

[1] Mr. L. Rice, in his *Mysore and Coorg*, remarks: 'Lingayats: The distinctive mark of this caste is the wearing on the person of a *Jangama lingam*, or portable linga. It is a small black stone about the size of an acorn, and is enshrined in a silver box of peculiar shape, which is worn suspended from the neck or tied round the arm. The followers of Basava (the founder of the sect, whose name literally means *Bull*, was in fact regarded as the incarnation of Nandi, the bull of Siva) are properly called Lingavantas, but Lingayats has become a well-known designation, though not used by themselves, the name Sivabhakta or Sivachar being one they generally assume.'—ED.

[2] This custom is gradually giving way now amongst the higher castes. —ED.

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children of two brothers or of two sisters may not intermarry. Among descendants from the same stock the male line always has the right of contracting marriage with the female line; but the children of the same line may never intermarry.

The reason given for this custom is that children of the male line, as also those of the female line, continue from generation to generation to call themselves brothers and sisters for as long a time as it is publicly recognized that they spring from the same stock. A man would be marrying his sister, it would be said, if the children of either the male or the female line intermarried amongst themselves; whereas the children of the male line do not call the children of the female line brothers and sisters, and vice versa, but call each other by special names expressive of the relationship. Thus a man can, and even must, marry the daughter of his sister, but never the daughter of his brother. A male first cousin marries a female first cousin, the daughter of his maternal aunt; but in no case may he marry the daughter of his paternal uncle.

This rule is universally and invariably observed by all castes, from the Brahmin to the Pariah. It is obligatory on the male line to unite itself with the female line. Agreeably to this a custom has arisen which so far as I know is peculiar to the Brahmins. They are all supposed to know the *gotram* or stock from which they spring: that is to say, they know who was the ancient *Muni* or devotee from whom they descend, and they always take care, in order to avoid intermarriage with a female descendant of this remote priestly ancestor, to marry into a *gotram* other than their own.

Hindus who cannot contract a suitable marriage amongst their own relations are nevertheless bound to marry in their own caste, and even in that subdivision of it to which they belong. In no case are they permitted to contract marriages with strangers. Furthermore, persons belonging to a caste in one part of the country cannot contract marriages with persons of the same caste in another part, even though they may be precisely the same castes under different names. Thus the Tamil *Yedeyers* and the Canarese *Uppareru* would never consent to take wives from the Telugu *Gollavaru* and the Tamil *Pillay*, although the first two are, except for their names, identical with the second two.

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The most distinguished of the four main castes into which the Hindus were originally separated by their first legislators is, as we have before remarked, that of the Brahmins. After them come the Kshatriyas, or Rajahs. Superiority of rank is at present warmly contested between the Vaisyas, or merchants, and the Sudras, or cultivators. The former appear to have almost entirely lost their superiority except in the Hindu books, where they are invariably placed before the Sudras. In ordinary life the latter hold themselves to be superior to the Vaisyas, and consider themselves privileged to mark their superiority in many respects by treating them with contumely.

With regard to the Vaisya caste an almost incredible but nevertheless well-attested peculiarity is everywhere observable. There is not a pretty woman to be found in the caste. I have never had much to do with the women of the Vaisya caste; I cannot therefore without injustice venture to add my testimony to that of others on this subject; but I confess that the few Vaisya women I have seen from time to time were not such as to afford me an ocular refutation of the popular prejudice. However, Vaisya women are generally wealthy, and they manage to make up for their lack of beauty by their elegant attire.

Even the Brahmins do not hold the highest social rank undisputed. The *Panchalas*, or five classes of artisans already mentioned, refuse, in some districts, to acknowledge Brahmin predominance, although these five classes themselves are considered to be of very low rank amongst the Sudras and are everywhere held in contempt. Brahmin predominance is also still more warmly contested by the Jains, of whom I have treated in one of the Appendices to this work.

As to the particular subdivisions of each caste it is difficult to decide the order of hierarchy observed amongst them. Subcastes which are despised in one district are often greatly esteemed in another, according as they conduct themselves with greater propriety or follow more important callings. Thus the caste to which the ruler of a country belongs, however low it may be considered elsewhere, ranks amongst the highest in the ruler's own dominions, and every member of it derives some reflection of dignity from its chief.

After all, public opinion is the surest guide of caste superiority

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amongst the Sudras, and a very slight acquaintance with the customs of a province and with the private life of its inhabitants will suffice for fixing the position which each caste has acquired by common consent.

In general it will be found that those castes are most honoured who are particular in keeping themselves pure by constant bathing and by abstaining from animal food, who are exact in the observance of marriage regulations, who keep their women shut up and punish them severely when they err, and who resolutely maintain the customs and privileges of their order.

Of all the Hindus the Brahmins strive most to keep up appearances of outward and inward purity by frequent ablutions and severe abstinence not only from meat and everything that has contained the principle of life, but also from several natural products of the earth which prejudice and superstition teach them to be impure and defiling. It is chiefly to the scrupulous observance of such customs that the Brahmins owe the predominance of their illustrious order, and the reverence and respect with which they are everywhere treated.

Amongst the different classes of Sudras, those who permit widow remarriage are considered the most abject, and, except the Pariahs, I know very few castes in which such marriages are allowed to take place openly and with the sanction of the caste[1].

The division into castes is the paramount distinction amongst the Hindus; but there is still another division, that of sects. The two best known are those of Siva and Vishnu, which are again divided into a large number of others.

There are several castes, too, which may be distinguished by certain marks painted on the forehead or other parts of the body.

The first three of the four main castes, that is to say the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas, are distinguished by a thin cord hung across from the left shoulder to the right hip. But this cord is also worn by the Jains and even by the *Panchalas*, or five castes of artisans, so one is apt to be deceived by it.

[1] Remarriage in the case of virgin widows is one of the foremost planks in the platform of Social Reform, but it is opposed violently by the orthodox.—ED.

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From what has been said it will appear that the name of a caste forms after all its best indication. It was thus that the tribes of Israel were distinguished. The names of several of the Hindu castes have a known meaning; but for the most part they date from such ancient times that it is impossible to find out their significance.

There is yet another division more general than any I have referred to yet, namely, that into Right-hand and Left-hand factions. This appears to be but a modern invention, since it is not mentioned in any of the ancient books of the country; and I have been assured that it is unknown in Northern India. Be that as it may, I do not believe that any idea of this baneful institution, as it exists at the present day, ever entered the heads of those wise lawgivers who considered they had found in caste distinctions the best guarantee for the observance of the laws which they prescribed for the people.

This division into Right-hand and Left-hand factions, whoever invented it, has turned out to be the most direful disturber of the public peace. It has proved a perpetual source of riots, and the cause of endless animosity amongst the natives.

Most castes belong either to the Left-hand or Right-hand faction. The former comprises the Vaisyas or trading classes, the *Panchalas* or artisan classes, and some of the low Sudra castes. It also contains the lowest caste, namely, the *Chucklers* or leather-workers, who are looked upon as its chief support.

To the Right-hand faction belong most of the higher castes of Sudras. The Pariahs are its chief support, as a proof of which they glory in the title *Valangai-Mougattar*, or friends of the Right-hand. In the disputes and conflicts which so often take place between the two factions it is always the Pariahs who make the most disturbance and do the most damage.

The Brahmins, Rajahs, and several classes of Sudras are content to remain neutral, and take no part in these quarrels. They are often chosen as arbiters in the differences which the two factions have to settle between themselves.

The opposition between the two factions arises from certain exclusive privileges to which both lay claim. But as these alleged privileges are nowhere clearly defined and recognized, they result in confusion and uncertainty, and are with difficulty

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capable of settlement. In these circumstances one cannot hope to conciliate both parties; all that one can do is to endeavour to compromise matters as far as possible.

When one faction trespasses on the so-called rights of the other, tumults arise which spread gradually over large tracts of territory, afford opportunity for excesses of all kinds, and generally end in bloody conflicts. The Hindu, ordinarily so timid and gentle in all other circumstances of life, seems to change his nature completely on occasions like these. There is no danger that he will not brave in maintaining what he calls his rights, and rather than sacrifice a tittle of them he will expose himself without fear to the risk of losing his life.

I have several times witnessed instances of these popular insurrections excited by the mutual pretensions of the two factions and pushed to such an extreme of fury that the presence of a military force has been insufficient to quell them, to allay the clamour, or to control the excesses in which the contending factions consider themselves entitled to indulge.

Occasionally, when the magistrates fail to effect a reconciliation by peaceful means, it is necessary to resort to force in order to suppress the disturbances. I have sometimes seen these rioters stand up against several discharges of artillery without exhibiting any sign of submission. And when at last the armed force has succeeded in restoring order it is only for a time. At the very first opportunity the rioters are at work again, regardless of the punishment they have received, and quite ready to renew the conflict as obstinately as before. Such are the excesses to which the mild and peaceful Hindu abandons himself when his courage is aroused by religious and political fanaticism.

The rights and privileges for which the Hindus are ready to fight such sanguinary battles appear highly ridiculous, especially to a European. Perhaps the sole cause of the contest is the right to wear slippers or to ride through the streets in a palanquin or on horseback during marriage festivals. Sometimes it is the privilege of being escorted on certain occasions by armed retainers, sometimes that of having a trumpet sounded in front of a procession, or of being accompanied by native musicians at public ceremonies. Perhaps it is simply the particular kind of musical instrument suitable to such occasions that is in dispute; or perhaps it may be the right of carrying flags of

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certain colours or certain devices during these ceremonies. Such at any rate are a few of the privileges for which Hindus are ready to cut each others' throats.

It not unfrequently happens that one faction makes an attack on the rights, real or pretended, of the other. Thereupon the trouble begins, and soon becomes general if it is not appeased at the very outset by prudent and vigorous measures on the part of the magistracy.

I could instance very many examples bearing on this fatal distinction between Right-hand and Left-hand; but what I have already said is enough to show the spirit which animates the Hindus in this matter. I once witnessed a dispute of this nature between the Pariahs and *Chucklers*, or leather-workers. There seemed reason to fear such disastrous consequences throughout the whole district in question, that many of the more peaceful inhabitants began to desert their villages and to carry away their goods and chattels to a place of safety, just as is done when the country is threatened by the near approach of a Mahratta army. However, matters did not reach this extremity. The principal inhabitants of the district opportunely offered to arbitrate in the matter, and they succeeded by diplomacy and conciliation in smoothing away the difficulties and in appeasing the two factions, who were only awaiting the signal to attack each other.

One would not easily guess the cause of this formidable commotion. It simply arose from the fact that a *Chuckler* had dared to appear at a public ceremony with red flowers stuck in his turban, a privilege which the Pariahs alleged to belong exclusively to the Right-hand faction[1]!

[1] These faction fights have gradually disappeared under the civilizing influences of education and good government; and if they ever occur at all, are confined to the lowest castes and never spread beyond the limits of a village. The distinctions between the two factions, however, still exist. —ED.

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CHAPTER II

Advantages resulting from Caste Divisions.—Similar Divisions amongst many Ancient Nations.

MANY persons study so imperfectly the spirit and character of the different nations that inhabit the earth, and the influence of climate on their manners, customs, predilections, and usages, that they are astonished to find how widely such nations differ from each other. Trammelled by the prejudices of their own surroundings, such persons think nothing well regulated that is not included in the polity and government of their own country. They would like to see all nations of the earth placed on precisely the same footing as themselves. Everything which differs from their own customs they consider either uncivilized or ridiculous. Now, although man's nature is pretty much the same all the world over, it is subject to so many differentiations caused by soil, climate, food, religion, education, and other circumstances peculiar to different countries, that the system of civilization adopted by one people would plunge another into a state of barbarism and cause its complete downfall.

I have heard some persons, sensible enough in other respects, but imbued with all the prejudices that they have brought with them from Europe, pronounce what appears to me an altogether erroneous judgement in the matter of caste divisions amongst the Hindus. In their opinion, caste is not only useless to the body politic, it is also ridiculous, and even calculated to bring trouble and disorder on the people. For my part, having lived many years on friendly terms with the Hindus, I have been able to study their national life and character closely, and I have arrived at a quite opposite decision on this subject of caste. I believe caste division to be in many respects the *chef-d'œuvre*, the happiest effort, of Hindu legislation. I am persuaded that it is simply and solely due to the distribution of the people into castes that India did not lapse into a state of barbarism, and

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that she preserved and perfected the arts and sciences of civilization whilst most other nations of the earth remained in a state of barbarism. I do not consider caste to be free from many great drawbacks; but I believe that the resulting advantages, in the case of a nation constituted like the Hindus, more than outweigh the resulting evils.

To establish the justice of this contention we have only to glance at the condition of the various races of men who live in the same latitude as the Hindus, and to consider the past and present status of those among them whose natural disposition and character have not been influenced for good by the purifying doctrines of Revealed Religion. We can judge what the Hindus would have been like, had they not been held within the pale of social duty by caste regulations, if we glance at neighbouring nations west of the Peninsula and east of it beyond the Ganges as far as China. In China itself a temperate climate and a form of government peculiarly adapted to a people unlike any other in the world have produced the same effect as the distinction of caste among the Hindus.

After much careful thought I can discover no other reason except caste which accounts for the Hindus not having fallen into the same state of barbarism as their neighbours and as almost all nations inhabiting the torrid zone. Caste assigns to each individual his own profession or calling; and the handing down of this system from father to son, from generation to generation, makes it impossible for any person or his descendants to change the condition of life which the law assigns to him for any other. Such an institution was probably the only means that the most clear-sighted prudence could devise for maintaining a state of civilization amongst a people endowed with the peculiar characteristics of the Hindus.

We can picture what would become of the Hindus if they were not kept within the bounds of duty by the rules and penalties of caste, by looking at the position of the Pariahs, or outcastes of India, who, checked by no moral restraint, abandon themselves to their natural propensities. Anybody who has studied the conduct and character of the people of this class—which, by the way, is the largest of any in India [1]—will agree with me that

[1] This is true only of Southern India, where the Pariahs number 5,000,000. They form one-seventh of the total population of the Madras Presidency.

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a State consisting entirely of such inhabitants could not long endure, and could not fail to lapse before long into a condition of barbarism. For my own part, being perfectly familiar with this class, and acquainted with its natural predilections and sentiments, I am persuaded that a nation of Pariahs left to themselves would speedily become worse than the hordes of cannibals who wander in the vast wastes of Africa, and would soon take to devouring each other.

I am no less convinced that if the Hindus were not kept within the limits of duty and obedience by the system of caste, and by the penal regulations attached to each phase of it, they would soon become just what the Pariahs are, and probably something still worse. The whole country would necessarily fall into a state of hopeless anarchy, and, before the present generation disappeared, this nation, so polished under present conditions, would have to be reckoned amongst the most uncivilized of the world. The legislators of India, whoever they may have been, were far too wise and too well acquainted with the natural character of the people for whom they prescribed laws to leave it to the discretion or fancy of each individual to cultivate what knowledge he pleased, or to exercise, as seemed best to him, any of the various professions, arts, or industries which are necessary for the preservation and well-being of a State.

They set out from that cardinal principle common to all ancient legislators, that no person should be useless to the commonwealth. At the same time they recognized that they were dealing with a people who were indolent and careless by nature, and whose propensity to be apathetic was so aggravated by the climate in which they lived, that unless every individual had a profession or employment rigidly imposed upon him, the social fabric could not hold together and must quickly fall into the most deplorable state of anarchy. These ancient lawgivers, therefore, being well aware of the danger caused by religious and political innovations, and being anxious to establish durable and inviolable rules for the different castes comprising the Hindu nation, saw no surer way of attaining

Of late years the degraded condition of these outcastes has attracted much attention, and a great deal is now being done to elevate them morally and materially.—ED.

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their object than by combining in an unmistakable manner those two great foundations of orderly government, religion and politics. Accordingly there is not one of their ancient usages, not one of their observances, which has not some religious principle or object attached to it. Everything, indeed, is governed by superstition and has religion for its motive. The style of greeting, the mode of dressing, the cut of clothes, the shape of ornaments and their manner of adjustment, the various details of the toilette, the architecture of houses, the corners where the hearth is placed and where the cooking pots must stand, the manner of going to bed and of sleeping, the forms of civility and politeness that must be observed: all these are severely regulated.

During the many years that I studied Hindu customs I cannot say that I ever observed a single one, however unimportant and simple, and, I may add, however filthy and disgusting, which did not rest on some religious principle or other. Nothing is left to chance; everything is laid down by rule, and the foundation of all their customs is purely and simply religion. It is for this reason that the Hindus hold all their customs and usages to be inviolable, for, being essentially religious, they consider them as sacred as religion itself.

And, be it noted, this plan of dividing the people into castes is not confined to the lawgivers of India. The wisest and most famous of all lawgivers, Moses, availed himself of the same institution, as being the one which offered him the best means of governing the intractable and rebellious people of whom he had been appointed the patriarch.

The division of the people into castes existed also amongst the Egyptians. With them, as with the Hindus, the law assigned an occupation to each individual, which was handed down from father to son. It was forbidden to any man to have two professions, or to change his own. Each caste had a special quarter assigned to it, and people of a different caste were prohibited from settling there. Nevertheless there was this difference between the Egyptians and the Hindus: with the former all castes and all professions were held in esteem; all employments, even of the meanest kind, were alike regarded as honourable; and, although the priestly and military castes possessed peculiar privileges, nobody would have considered

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it anything but criminal to despise the classes whose work, whatever it happened to be, contributed to the general good[1]. With the Hindus, on the other hand, there are professions and callings to which prejudice attaches such degradation that those who follow them are universally despised by those castes which in the public estimation exercise higher functions.

It must here be remarked, however, that the four great professions without which a civilized nation could not exist, namely, the army, agriculture, commerce, and weaving, are held everywhere in the highest esteem. All castes, from the Brahmin to the Pariah, are permitted to follow the first three, and the fourth can be followed by all the principal classes of Sudras[2].

These same caste distinctions observable amongst Hindus exist likewise, with some differences, amongst the Arabs and Tartars. Probably, indeed, they were common to the majority of ancient nations. Cecrops, it will be remembered, separated the people of Athens into four tribes or classes, while their great lawgiver, Solon, upheld this distinction and strengthened it in several ways. Numa Pompilius, again, could devise no better way of putting an end to the racial hatred between Sabines and Romans than by separating the body of the people into different castes and classes. The result of his policy was just what he had desired. Both Sabines and Romans, once amalgamated in this manner, forgot their national differences and thought only of those of their class or caste.

Those who instituted the caste system could not but perceive that with nations in an embryonic stage the more class distinctions there are the more order and symmetry there must be, and the more easy it is to exercise control and preserve order. This, indeed, is the result which caste classification amongst the Hindus has achieved. The shame which would reflect on a whole caste if the faults of one of its individual members went unpunished guarantees that the caste will execute justice, defend its own honour, and keep all its members within the bounds of duty. For, be it noted, every caste has its own laws and

[1] See what the illustrious Bossuet says on this point in his *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*, Part III.—DUBOIS.

[2] This statement is not quite correct, for in Southern India, at any rate, some classes of Pariahs are most expert weavers, and are honoured as such throughout the country.—ED.

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regulations, or rather, we may say, its own customs, in accordance with which the severest justice is meted out, just as it was by the patriarchs of old.

Thus in several castes adultery is punishable by death[1]. Girls or widows who succumb to temptation are made to suffer the same penalty as those who have seduced them. The largest temple of the town of Conjeeveram, in the Carnatic, an immense building, was constructed, so it is said, by a rich Brahmin who had been convicted of having had illicit intercourse with a low-caste Pariah woman. He was, however, sentenced to this severe penalty, not so much on account of the immorality of his action, seeing that in the opinion of the Brahmins it was not immoral at all, but on account of the low-caste person who had been the partner of his incontinence. There are various kinds of delinquencies in connexion with which a caste may take proceedings, not only against the principal offenders, but against those who have taken any part whatever in them. Thus it is caste authority which, by means of its wise rules and prerogatives, preserves good order, suppresses vice, and saves Hindus from sinking into a state of barbarism.

It may also be said that caste regulations counteract to a great extent the evil effects which would otherwise be produced on the national character by a religion that encourages the most unlicensed depravity of morals, as well in the decorations of its temples as in its dogmas and ritual.

In India, where the princes and the aristocracy live in extreme indolence, attaching little importance to making their dependants happy and taking small pains to inculcate in them a sense of right and wrong, there are no other means of attaining these desirable ends and preserving good order than by authoritative rulings of the caste system. The worst of it is, these powers are not sufficiently wide, or rather they are too often relaxed. Many castes exercise them with severity in cases that are for the most part frivolous, but display an easy and culpable indulgence towards real and serious delinquencies. On the other hand, caste authority is often a check against abuses which the despotic rulers of the country are too apt to indulge in. Sometimes one may see, as the result of a caste order, the tradesmen and merchants of a whole district closing their shops, the labourers

[1] This of course is no longer allowed by law.—ED.

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abandoning their fields, or the artisans leaving their workshops, all because of some petty insult or of some petty extortion suffered by some member of their caste; and the aggrieved people will remain obstinately in this state of opposition until the injury has been atoned for and those responsible for it punished.

Another advantage resulting from the caste system is the hereditary continuation of families and that purity of descent which is a peculiarity of the Hindus, and which consists in never mixing the blood of one family or caste with that of another. Marriages are confined to parties belonging to the same family, or at any rate the same caste. In India, at any rate, there can be no room for the reproach, so often deserved in European countries, that families have deteriorated by alliances with persons of low or unknown extraction. A Hindu of high caste can, without citing his title or producing his genealogical tree, trace his descent back for more than two thousand years without fear of contradiction. He can also, without any other passport than that of his high caste, and in spite of his poverty, present himself anywhere; and he would be more courted for a marriage alliance than any richer man of less pure descent. Nevertheless, it is not to be denied that there are some districts where the people are not quite so particular about their marriages, though such laxity is blamed and held up to shame as an outrage on propriety, while those guilty of it take very good care to conceal it as much as possible from the public.

Further, one would be justified in asserting that it is to caste distinctions that India owes the preservation of her arts and industries. For the same reason she would have reached a high standard of perfection in them had not the avarice of her rulers prevented it. It was chiefly to attain this object that the Egyptians were divided into castes, and that their laws assigned the particular place which each individual should occupy in the commonwealth. Their lawgivers no doubt considered that by this means all arts and industries would continue to improve from generation to generation, for men must needs do well that which they have always been in the habit of seeing done and which they have been constantly practising from their youth.

This perfection in arts and manufactures would undoubtedly have been attained by so industrious a people as the Hindus, if, as I have before remarked, the cupidity of their rulers had not

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acted as a check. As a matter of fact, no sooner has an artisan gained the reputation of excelling in his craft than he is at once carried off by order of the sovereign, taken to the palace, and there confined for the rest of his life, forced to toil without remission and with little or no reward. Under these circumstances, which are common to all parts of India under the government of native princes, it is hardly surprising that every art and industry is extinguished and all healthy competition deadened. This is the chief and almost the only reason why progress in the arts has been so slow among the Hindus, and why in this respect they are now far behind other nations who did not become civilized for many centuries after themselves.

Their workmen certainly lack neither industry nor skill. In the European settlements, where they are paid according to their merit, many native artisans are to be met with whose work would do credit to the best artisans of the West. Moreover they feel no necessity to use the many European tools, whose nomenclature alone requires special study. One or two axes, as many saws and planes, all of them so rudely fashioned that a European workman would be able to do nothing with them—these are almost the only instruments that are to be seen in the hands of Hindu carpenters. The working materials of a journeyman goldsmith usually comprise a tiny anvil, a crucible, two or three small hammers, and as many files. With such simple tools the patient Hindu, thanks to his industry, can produce specimens of work which are often not to be distinguished from those imported at great expense from foreign countries. To what a standard of excellence would these men have attained if they had been from the earliest times subjected to good masters!

In order to form a just idea of what the Hindus would have done with their arts and manufactures if their natural industry had been properly encouraged, we have only to visit the workshop of one of their weavers or of one of their printers on cloth and carefully examine the instruments with which they produce those superb muslins, those superfine cloths, those beautiful coloured piece-goods, which are everywhere admired, and which in Europe occupy a high place among the principal articles of adornment. In manufacturing these magnificent stuffs the artisan uses his feet almost as much as his hands. Furthermore,

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the weaving loom, and the whole apparatus for spinning the thread before it is woven, as well as the rest of the tools which he uses for the work, are so simple and so few that altogether they would hardly comprise a load for one man. Indeed it is by no means a rare sight to see one of these weavers changing his abode, and carrying on his back all that is necessary for setting to work the moment he arrives at his new home.

Their printed calicoes, which are not less admired than their muslins, are manufactured in an equally simple manner. Three or four bamboos to stretch the cloth, as many brushes for applying the colours, with a few pieces of potsherd to contain them, and a hollow stone for pounding them: these are pretty well all their stock in trade.

I will venture to express one other remark on the political advantages resulting from caste distinctions. In India parental authority is but little respected: and parents, overcome doubtless by that apathetic indifference which characterizes Hindus generally, are at little pains, as I shall show later on, to inspire those feelings of filial reverence which constitute family happiness by enchaining the affections of the children to the authors of their existence. Outward affection appears to exist between brothers and sisters, but in reality it is neither very strong nor very sincere. It quickly vanishes after the death of their parents, and subsequently, we may say, they only come together to fight and to quarrel. Thus, as the ties of blood relationship formed so insecure a bond between different members of a community, and guaranteed no such mutual assistance and support as were needed, it became necessary to bring families together in large caste communities, the individual members of which had a common interest in protecting, supporting, and defending each other. It was thus that the links of the Hindu social chain were so strongly and ingeniously forged that nothing was able to break them.

This was the object which the ancient lawgivers of India attained by establishing the caste system, and they thereby acquired a title to honour unexampled in the history of the world. Their work has stood the test of thousands of years, and has survived the lapse of time and the many revolutions to which this portion of the globe has been subjected. The Hindus have often passed beneath the yoke of foreign invaders, whose

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religions, laws, and customs have been very different from their own; yet all efforts to impose foreign institutions on the people of India have been futile, and foreign occupation has never dealt more than a feeble blow against Indian custom. Above all, and before all, it was the caste system which protected them. Its authority was extensive enough to include sentences of death, as I have before remarked. The story is told, and the truth of it is incontestable, that a man of the Rajput caste was a few years ago compelled by the people of his own caste and by the principal inhabitants of his place of abode to execute, with his own hand, a sentence of death passed on his daughter. This unhappy girl had been discovered in the arms of a youth, who would have suffered the same penalty had he not evaded it by sudden flight.

Nevertheless, although the penalty of death may be inflicted by some castes under certain circumstances, this form of punishment is seldom resorted to nowadays. Whenever it is thought to be indispensable, it is the father or the brother who is expected to execute it, in secrecy. Generally speaking, however, recourse is had by preference to the imposition of a fine and to various ignominious corporal punishments. As regards these latter, we may note as examples the punishments inflicted on women who have forfeited their honour, such as shaving their heads, compelling them to ride through the public streets mounted on asses and with their faces turned towards the tail, forcing them to stand a long time with a basket of mud on their heads before the assembled caste people, throwing into their faces the ordure of cattle, breaking the cotton thread of those possessing the right to wear it, and excommunicating the guilty from their caste [1].

[1] The infliction of such punishments might nowadays be followed by prosecution in the Civil and Criminal Courts.—ED.

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CHAPTER III

Expulsion from Caste.—Cases in which such Degradation is inflicted.—By whom inflicted.—Restoration to Caste.—Methods of effecting it.

Of all kinds of punishment the hardest and most unbearable for a Hindu is that which cuts him off and expels him from his caste. Those whose duty it is to inflict it are the *gurus*, of whom I shall have more to say in a subsequent chapter, and, in default of them, the caste headmen. These latter are usually to be found in every district, and it is to them that all doubtful or difficult questions affecting the caste system are referred. They call in, in order to help them to decide such questions, a few elders who are versed in the intricacies of the matters in dispute.

This expulsion from caste, which follows either an infringement of caste usages or some public offence calculated if left unpunished to bring dishonour on the whole community, is a kind of social excommunication, which deprives the unhappy person who suffers it of all intercourse with his fellow-creatures. It renders him, as it were, dead to the world, and leaves him nothing in common with the rest of society. In losing his caste he loses not only his relations and friends, but often his wife and his children, who would rather leave him to his fate than share his disgrace with him. Nobody dare eat with him or even give him a drop of water. If he has marriageable daughters nobody asks them in marriage, and in like manner his sons are refused wives. He has to take it for granted that wherever he goes he will be avoided, pointed at with scorn, and regarded as an outcaste.

If after losing caste a Hindu could obtain admission into an inferior caste, his punishment would in some degree be tolerable; but even this humiliating compensation is denied to him. A simple Sudra with any notions of honour and

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propriety would never associate or even speak with a Brahmin degraded in this manner. It is necessary, therefore, for an outcaste to seek asylum in the lowest caste of Pariahs if he fail to obtain restoration to his own; or else he is obliged to associate with persons of doubtful caste. There are always people of this kind, especially in the quarters inhabited by Europeans; and unhappy is the man who puts trust in them! A caste Hindu is often a thief and a bad character, but a Hindu without caste is almost always a rogue.

Expulsion from caste is generally put in force without much formality. Sometimes it is due merely to personal hatred or caprice. Thus, when persons refuse, without any apparent justification, to attend the funeral or marriage ceremonies of their relations or friends, or when they happen not to invite the latter on similar occasions, the individuals thus slighted never fail to take proceedings in order to obtain satisfaction for the insult offered to them, and the arbitrators called in to decide the case usually pass a decree of excommunication. When a case is thus settled by arbitration, however, a sentence of excommunication does not bring upon the guilty person the same disgrace and the same penalties which are the lot of those whose offence offers no room for compromise.

Otherwise it matters little whether the offence be deliberate, whether it be serious or trivial, in determining that a person shall pay this degrading penalty. A Pariah who concealed his origin, mixed with other Hindus, entered their houses and ate with them without being recognized, would render those who had thus been brought into contact with him liable to ignominious expulsion from their caste. At the same time a Pariah guilty of such a daring act would inevitably be murdered on the spot, if his entertainers recognized him.

A Sudra, too, who indulged in illicit intercourse with a Pariah woman would be rigorously expelled from caste if his offence became known.

A number of Brahmins assembled together for some family ceremony once admitted to their feast, without being aware of it, a Sudra who had gained admittance on the false assertion that he belonged to their caste. On the circumstance being discovered, these Brahmins were one and all outcasted, and were unable to obtain reinstatement until they had gone

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through all kinds of formalities and been subjected to considerable expense.

I once witnessed amongst the *Gollavarus*, or shepherds, an instance of even greater severity. A marriage had been arranged, and, in the presence of the family concerned, certain ceremonies which were equivalent to betrothal amongst ourselves had taken place. Before the actual celebration of the marriage, which was fixed for a considerable time afterwards, the bridegroom died. The parents of the girl, who was very young and pretty, thereupon married her to another man. This was in direct violation of the custom of the caste, which condemns to perpetual widowhood girls thus betrothed, even when, as in this case, the future bridegroom dies before marriage has been consummated. The consequence was that all the persons who had taken part in the second ceremony were expelled from caste, and nobody would contract marriage or have any intercourse whatever with them. A long time afterwards I met several of them, well advanced in age, who had been for this reason alone unable to obtain husbands or wives, as the case might be.

Let me relate another instance. Eleven Brahmins travelling in company were obliged to cross a district devastated by war. They arrived hungry and tired in a village, which, contrary to their expectations, they found deserted. They had with them a small quantity of rice, but they could find no other pots to boil it in than some which had been left in the house of the village washerman. To touch these would constitute in the case of Brahmins an almost ineffaceable defilement. Nevertheless, suffering from hunger as they were, they swore mutual secrecy, and after washing and scouring the pots a hundred times they prepared their food in them. The rice was served and the repast consumed by all but one, who refused to partake of it, and who had no sooner returned home than he proceeded to denounce the ten others to the chief Brahmins of the village. The news of such a scandal spread quickly, and gave rise to a great commotion amongst all classes of the inhabitants. An assembly was held. The delinquents were summoned and forced to appear. Warned beforehand, however, of the proceedings that were to be instituted against them, they took counsel together and agreed

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to answer unanimously, when called upon to explain, that it was the accuser himself who had committed the heinous sin and who had imputed it to them falsely and maliciously. The testimony of ten persons was calculated to carry more weight than that of one. The accused were consequently acquitted, while the accuser alone was ignominiously expelled from caste by the headmen, who, though they were perfectly sure of his innocence, were indignant at his treacherous disclosure.

From what has been said, it will no longer be surprising to learn that Hindus are as much, nay, even more, attached to their caste than the gentry of Europe are to their rank. Prone to using the most disgustingly abusive language in their quarrels, they nevertheless easily forgive and forget such insulting epithets; but if one should say of another that he is *a man without caste*, the insult would never be forgiven or forgotten.

This strict and universal observance of caste and caste usages forms practically their whole social law. A very great number of people are to be found amongst them, to whom death would appear far more desirable than life, if, for example, the latter were sustained by eating cow's flesh or any food prepared by Pariahs and outcastes.

It is this same caste feeling which gives rise to the contempt and aversion which they display towards all foreign nations, and especially towards Europeans, who, being as a rule but slightly acquainted with the customs and prejudices of the country, are constantly violating them. Owing to such conduct the Hindus look upon them as barbarians totally ignorant of all principles of honour and good breeding.

In several cases, at least, restoration to caste is an impossibility. But when the sentence of excommunication has been passed merely by relations, the culprit conciliates the principal members of his family and prostrates himself in a humble posture, and with signs of repentance, before his assembled castemen. He then listens without complaint to the rebukes which are showered upon him, receives the blows to which he is oftentimes condemned, and pays the fine which it is thought fit to impose upon him. Finally, after having solemnly promised to wipe out by good conduct the taint resulting from his degrading punishment,

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he sheds tears of repentance, performs the *sashtanga* before the assembly, and then serves a feast to the persons present. When all this is finished he is looked upon as reinstated. The *sashtanga*, by the way, is a sign or salute expressing humility, which is not only recognized amongst the Hindus and other Asiatic nations, but was in use amongst more ancient peoples. Instances of it are quoted in Scripture, where this extraordinary mark of respect is known as *adoration*, even when it is paid to simple mortals. (*Vide* Genesis xviii. 2; xix. 1; xxxiii. 3; xlii. 6; xliii. 26; l. 18, &c., &c.) In the same way the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and other nations mentioned in Holy Writ were acquainted with this method of reverent salutation and observed it under the same circumstances as the Hindus. As I shall often have occasion in this work to mention the *sashtanga* I will give here a definition of it. The person who performs it lies prostrate, his face on the ground and his arms extended beyond his head. It is called *sashtanga* from *the prostration of the six members*, because, when it is performed, the feet, the knees, the stomach, the chest, the forehead, and the arms must touch the earth. It is thus that prostrations are made before persons of high degree, such as princes and priests. Children sometimes prostrate themselves thus before their fathers. It is by no means rare to see Sudras of different classes performing *sashtanga* before Brahmins; and it often happens that princes, before engaging an enemy, thus prostrate themselves before their armies drawn up in battle array[1].

When expulsion from caste is the result of some heinous offence, the guilty person who is readmitted into caste has to submit to one or other of the following ordeals: his tongue is slightly burnt with a piece of heated gold; he is branded indelibly on different parts of his body with red-hot iron; he is made to walk barefooted over red-hot embers; or he is compelled to crawl several times under the belly of a cow. Finally, to complete his purification, he is made to drink the *pancha-gavia*. These words, of which a more detailed explanation will be given later on, signify literally *the five things*

[1] Here and elsewhere the Abbé makes the mistake of interpreting *sashtanga* to mean '*the six angas*,' or 'parts of the body.' *Sashtanga* (Sa-ashtanga) really means *with the eight parts of the body*, which are the two hands, the two feet, two knees, forehead, and breast.—ED.

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or substances derived from the body of a cow; namely, milk, curds, ghee (clarified butter), dung and urine, which are mixed together. The last-named, urine, is looked upon as the most efficacious for purifying any kind of uncleanness. I have often seen superstitious Hindus following the cows to pasture, waiting for the moment when they could collect the precious liquid in vessels of brass, and carrying it away while still warm to their houses. I have also seen them waiting to catch it in the hollow of their hands, drinking some of it and rubbing their faces and heads with the rest. Rubbing it in this way is supposed to wash away all external uncleanness, and drinking it to cleanse all internal impurity. When this disgusting ceremony of the *pancha-gavia* is over, the person who has been reinstated is expected to give a great feast to the Brahmins who have collected from all parts to witness it. Presents of more or less value are also expected by them, and not until these are forthcoming does the guilty person obtain all his rights and privileges again.

There are certain offences so heinous in the sight of Hindus, however, as to leave no hope of reinstatement to those who commit them. Such, for example, would be the crime of a Brahmin who had openly cohabited with a Pariah woman. Were the woman of any other caste, I believe that it would be possible for a guilty person, by getting rid of her and by repudiating any children he had had by her, to obtain pardon, after performing many purifying ceremonies and expending much money. But hopeless would be the case of the man who under any circumstances had eaten of cow's flesh. There would be no hope of pardon for him, even supposing he had committed such an awful sacrilege under compulsion.

It would be possible to cite several instances of strange and inflexible severity in the punishment of caste offences. When the last Mussulman Prince reigned in Mysore and sought to proselytize the whole Peninsula, he began by having several Brahmins forcibly circumcised, compelling them afterwards to eat cow's flesh as an unequivocal token of their renunciation of caste. Subsequently the people were freed from the yoke of this tyrant, and many of those who had been compelled to embrace the Mahomedan religion made every possible effort, and offered very large sums, to be readmitted

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to Hinduism. Assemblies were held in different parts of the country to thoroughly consider their cases. It was everywhere decided that it was quite possible to purify the uncleanness of circumcision and of intercourse with Mussulmans. But the crime of eating cow's flesh, even under compulsion, was unanimously declared to be irredeemable and not to be effaced either by presents, or by fire, or by the *pancha-gavia*.

A similar decision was given in the case of Sudras who found themselves in the same position, and who, after trying all possible means, were not more successful. One and all, therefore, were obliged to remain Mahomedans.

A Hindu, of whatever caste, who has once had the misfortune to be excommunicated, can never altogether get rid of the stain of his disgrace. If he ever gets into trouble his excommunication is always thrown in his teeth.

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CHAPTER IV

Antiquity and Origin of Caste.

APPARENTLY there is no existing institution older than the caste system of the Hindus. Greek and Latin authors who have written about India concur in thinking that it has been in force from time immemorial; and certainly the unswerving observance of its rules seems to me an almost incontestable proof of its antiquity[1]. Under a solemn and unceasing obliga-

[1] Dr. Muir, in *Old Sanskrit Texts*, vol. i. p. 159, reviewing the texts which he had cited on this subject, says :—'First, we have the set of accounts in which the four castes are said to have sprung from progenitors who were separately created; but in regard to the manner of their creation we find the greatest diversity of statement. The most common story is that the castes issued from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Purusha, or Brāhma. The oldest extant passage in which this idea occurs, and from which all the later myths of a similar tenor have no doubt been borrowed, is to be found in the Purusha Sūkta; but it is doubtful whether, in the form in which it is there represented, this representation is anything more than an allegory. In some of the texts from the Bhāgavata Purāna traces of the same allegorical character may be perceived; but in Manu and the Purānas the mystical import of the Vedic text disappears, and the figurative narration is hardened into a literal statement of fact. In the chapters of the Vishnu, Vāyu, and Mārkandeya Purānas, where castes are described as coeval with creation, and as having been naturally distinguished by different *gunas*, or qualities, involving varieties of moral character, we are nevertheless allowed to infer that those qualities exerted no influence on the classes in which they were inherent, as the condition of the whole race during the Krita age is described as one of uniform perfection and happiness; while the actual separation into castes did not take place, according to the Vāyu Purāna, until men had become deteriorated in the Treta age.

'Second, in various passages from the Brāhmanas epic poems, and Purānas, the creation of mankind is described without the least allusion to any separate production of the progenitors of the four castes. And whilst in the chapters where they relate the distinct formations of the castes, the Purānas assign different natural dispositions to each class, they elsewhere represent all mankind as being at the creation uniformly distinguished by the quality of pas-

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tion as the Hindus are to respect its usages, new and strange customs are things unheard of in their country. Any person who attempted to introduce such innovations would excite universal resentment and opposition, and would be branded as a dangerous person. The task, however, would be such a difficult one that I can hardly believe that any proposal of the kind would ever enter an intelligent person's head. Everything is always done in exactly the same way; even the minutest details are invested with a solemn importance of their own, because a Hindu is convinced that it is only by paying rigorous attention to small details that more momentous concerns are safeguarded. Indeed, there is not another nation on earth which can pride itself on having so long preserved intact its social customs and regulations.

The Hindu legislators of old had the good sense to give stability to these customs and regulations by associating with them many outward ceremonies, which, by fixing them in the

sion. In one text men are said to be the offspring of Vivasat; in another his son Mami is said to be their progenitor, whilst in a third they are said to be descended from a female of the same name. The passage which declares Manu to have been the father of the human race explicitly affirms that men of all the four castes were descended from him. In another remarkable text the Mahābhārata categorically asserts that originally there was no distinction of classes, the existing distribution having arisen out of differences of character and occupation. In these circumstances, we may fairly conclude that the separate origination of the four castes was far from being an article of belief universally received by Indian antiquity.'

The following is the categorical assertion in the Mahābhārata (Santi parvan) above referred to. It occurs in the course of a discussion on caste between Bhrigu and Bharadwaja. Bhrigu, replying to a question put by Bharadwaja, says: 'The colour (*varna*) of the Brahmins was white; that of the Kshatriyas red; that of the Vaisyas yellow, and that of the Sudras black.' Bharadwaja here rejoins, 'If the caste (*varna*) of the four classes is distinguished by their colour (*varna*), then a confusion of all the castes is observable....' Bhrigu replies, 'There is no difference of castes: this world, having been at first created by Brāhma entirely Brahmanic, became (afterwards) separated into castes in consequence of works. Those Brahmins (lit. twice-born men) who were fond of sensual pleasure, fiery, irascible, prone to violence, who had forsaken their duty and were red limbed, fell into the condition of Kshatriyas. Those Brahmins who derived their livelihood from kine, who were yellow, who subsisted by agriculture, and who neglected to practise their duties, entered into the state of Vaisyas. Those Brahmins who were addicted to mischief and falsehood, who were covetous, who lived by all kinds of work, who were black and had fallen from purity, sank into the condition of Sudras.'—ED.

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minds of the people, ensured their more faithful observance. These ceremonies are invariably observed, and have never been allowed to degenerate into mere forms that can be neglected without grave consequences. Failure to perform a single one of them, however unimportant it might appear, would never go unpunished.

One cannot fail to remark how very similar some of these ceremonies are to those which were performed long ago amongst other nations. Thus the Hindu precepts about cleanness and uncleanness, as also the means employed for preserving the one and effacing the other, are similar in many respects to those of the ancient Hebrews. The rule about marrying in one's caste, and even in one's family, was specifically imposed upon the Jews in the laws which Moses gave them from God[1]. This rule, too, was in force a long time before that, for it appears to have been general amongst the Chaldeans. We find also in Holy Writ that Abraham espoused his niece, and that the holy patriarch sent into a far country for a maiden of his own family as a wife for his son Isaac. Again, Isaac and his wife Rebecca found it difficult to pardon their son Esau for marrying amongst strangers, that is, amongst the Canaanites; and they sent their son Jacob away into a distant land to seek a wife from amongst their own people.

In the same way to-day, Hindus residing in a foreign country will journey hundreds of leagues to their native land in search of wives for their sons.

Again, as to the caste system, Moses, as is well known, established it amongst the Hebrews in accordance with the commands of God. This holy lawgiver had, during his long sojourn in Egypt, observed the system as established in that country, and had doubtless recognized the good that resulted from it. Apparently, in executing the divine order with respect to it he simply adapted and perfected the system which was in force in Egypt.

The Indian caste system is of still older origin. The Hindu sacred writings record that the author of it was the God Brāhma, to whom they attribute the creation of the world, and who is said to have established this system when he peopled the earth. The Brahmins were the product of his brain; the

[1] Numbers xxxvi. 5–12.

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Kshatriyas or Rajahs issued from his shoulders; the Vaisyas from his belly; and the Sudras from his feet.

It is easy to understand the allegorical signification of this legend, in which one can distinctly trace the relative degrees of subordination of the different castes. The Brahmins, destined to fulfil the high functions of spiritual priesthood and to show the way of salvation to their fellow-men, issue from the head of the Creator; the Kshatriyas, endowed with physical force and destined to undergo the fatigues of war, have their origin in the shoulders and arms of Brāhma; the Vaisyas, whose duty it is to provide the food, the clothing, and other bodily necessities of man, are born in the belly of the god; and the Sudras, whose lot is servitude and rude labour in the fields, issue from his feet.

Besides this traditional origin of the different castes, known to all Hindus, there is another to be found in their books, which traces the institution back to the time of the Flood. For, it should be noted, this terrible world-renovating disaster is as well known to the Hindus as it was to Moses. On this important subject, however, I shall have more to say subsequently; suffice it to remark that a celebrated personage, reverenced by the Hindus, and known to them as *Mahanuvu*, escaped the calamity in an ark, in which were also the seven famous Penitents of India. After the Flood, according to Hindu writers, this saviour of the human race divided mankind into different castes, as they exist at the present day[1].

The many subdivisions into which these four great original castes were broken up date undoubtedly from later times. They were due to the absolute necessity of assigning to each person in a special manner his particular place in the social organization. There are some Hindu authors who assert that the individuals composing the first ramifications of the large Sudra caste were the bastard offspring of the other higher castes, and owed their origin to illicit intercourse with the widows of the four great caste divisions. It is said that these bastard children, born of a Brahmin father and a Kshatriya mother, or of a Vaisya father and a Sudra mother, &c., were not recog-

[1] The appellation *Mahanuvu* is well worthy of remark. It is a compound of two words—*Maha* great, and *Nuvu*, which undoubtedly is the same as *Noah*.—DUBOIS.

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nized by any of the four primary castes, and so they were placed in other caste categories and were assigned special employments, more or less humble, according to their extraction.

A few of these many subdivisions are said to be of quite recent origin. For instance, the five artisan classes are said to have originally formed only one class, as also the barbers and washermen, the *Gollavarus* and *Kurubas,* and a large number of others who in recent times have split up into new sub-castes.

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CHAPTER V

The Lower Classes of Sudras.—Pariahs.—*Chucklers*, or Cobblers, and others equally low.—Contempt in which they are held.—Pariahs strictly speaking Slaves.—Washermen, Barbers, and some others.—Disrepute into which Mechanical Skill has fallen.—Nomads and Vagabonds.—Gypsies.—Quacks.—Jugglers.—Wild Tribes, &c.

We have already remarked that amongst the immense number of classes of which the Sudra caste is composed, it is impossible to give precedence to any one class in particular; the natives themselves not being agreed on that point, and the social scale varying in different parts of the country. There are certain classes, however, who, owing to the depth of degradation into which they have fallen, are looked upon as almost another race of beings, altogether outside the pale of society; and they are perfectly ready to acknowledge their own comparative inferiority. The best known and most numerous of these castes is the *Parayer*, as it is called in Tamil, the word from which the European name Pariah is derived[1]. The particulars which I am about to give of this class will form most striking contrasts with those I shall relate subsequently about the Brahmins, and will serve to demonstrate a point to which I shall often refer, namely, how incapable the Hindus are of showing any moderation in their caste customs and observances.

Their contempt and aversion for these social outcastes are as extreme, on the one hand, as are the respect and veneration which they pay, on the other, to those whom their superstitions have invested with god-like attributes. Throughout the whole of India the Pariahs are looked upon as slaves by other castes, and are treated with great harshness. Hardly anywhere are they allowed to cultivate the soil for their own benefit, but

[1] *Parayen* means one that beats the drum (*parai*).—Ed.

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are obliged to hire themselves out to the other castes, who in return for a minimum wage exact the hardest tasks from them.

Furthermore, their masters may beat them at pleasure; the poor wretches having no right either to complain or to obtain redress for that or any other ill-treatment their masters may impose on them. In fact, these Pariahs are the born slaves of India; and had I to choose between the two sad fates of being a slave in one of our colonies or a Pariah here, I should unhesitatingly prefer the former.

This class is the most numerous of all, and in conjunction with that of the *Chucklers*, or cobblers, represents at least a quarter of the population. It is painful to think that its members, though so degraded, are yet the most useful of all. On them the whole agricultural work of the country devolves[1], and they have also other tasks to perform which are still harder and more indispensable.

However, notwithstanding the miserable condition of these wretched Pariahs, they are never heard to murmur, or to complain of their low estate. Still less do they ever dream of trying to improve their lot, by combining together, and forcing the other classes to treat them with that common respect which one man owes to another. The idea that he was born to be in subjection to the other castes is so ingrained in his mind that it never occurs to the Pariah to think that his fate is anything but irrevocable. Nothing will ever persuade him that men are all made of the same clay, or that he has the right to insist on better treatment than that which is meted out to him[2].

They live in hopeless poverty, and the greater number lack sufficient means to procure even the coarsest clothing. They go about almost naked, or at best clothed in the most hideous rags.

They live from hand to mouth the whole year round, and rarely know one day how they will procure food for the next.

[1] This is the case only in certain districts of Southern India, such as Chingleput and Tanjore. An appreciable percentage of the Pariahs has now migrated to the towns, where they serve as domestic servants in European and Eurasian households.—Ed.

[2] The Christian missionaries in India have done and are doing much to elevate the condition and character of this class. In Madras city there are now Pariah associations, and also a journal specially representing Pariah interests.—Ed.

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When they happen to have any money, they invariably spend it at once, and make a point of doing no work as long as they have anything left to live on.

In a few districts they are allowed to cultivate the soil on their own account, but in such cases they are almost always the poorest of their class. Pariahs who hire themselves out as labourers earn, at any rate, enough to live on; and their food, though often of the coarsest description, is sufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger. But those who are their own masters, and cultivate land for themselves, are so indolent and careless that their harvests, even in the most favourable seasons, are only sufficient to feed them for half the year.

The contempt and aversion with which the other castes—and particularly the Brahmins—regard these unfortunate people are carried to such an excess that in many places their presence, or even their footprints, are considered sufficient to defile the whole neighbourhood. They are forbidden to cross a street in which Brahmins are living. Should they be so ill-advised as to do so, the latter would have the right, not to strike them themselves, because they could not do so without defilement, or even touch them with the end of a long stick, but to order them to be severely beaten by other people. A Pariah who had the audacity to enter a Brahmin's house might possibly be murdered on the spot. A revolting crime of this sort has been actually perpetrated in States under the rule of native princes without a voice being raised in expostulation [1].

Any one who has been touched, whether inadvertently or purposely, by a Pariah is defiled by that single act, and may hold no communication with any person whatsoever until he has been purified by bathing, or by other ceremonies more or less important according to the status and customs of his caste. It would be contamination to eat with any members of this class; to touch food prepared by them, or even to drink water which they have drawn; to use an earthen vessel which they have held in their hands; to set foot inside one of their

[1] Even to this day a Pariah is not allowed to pass a Brahmin street in a village, though nobody can prevent, or prevents, his approaching or passing by a Brahmin's house in towns. The Pariahs, on their part, will under no circumstances allow a Brahmin to pass through their *parcherries* (collections of Pariah huts), as they firmly believe that it will lead to their ruin. —ED.

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houses, or to allow them to enter houses other than their own. Each of these acts would contaminate the person affected by it, and before being readmitted to his own caste such a person would have to go through many exacting and expensive formalities. Should it be proved that any one had had any connexion with a Pariah woman he would be treated with even greater severity. Nevertheless, the disgust which these Pariahs inspire is not so intense in some parts of the country as in others. The feeling is most strongly developed in the southern and western districts of the Peninsula; in the north it is less apparent. In the northern part of Mysore the other classes of Sudras allow Pariahs to approach them, and even permit them to enter that part of the house which is used for cattle. Indeed, in some places custom is so far relaxed that a Pariah may venture to put his head and one foot, but one foot only, inside the room occupied by the master of the house. It is said that still further north the difference between this and other Sudra castes gradually diminishes, until at last it disappears altogether.

The origin of this degraded class can be traced to a very early period, as it is mentioned in the most ancient Puranas. The Pariahs were most probably composed, in the first instance, of all the disreputable individuals of different classes of society, who, on account of various offences, had forfeited their right to associate with respectable men. They formed a class apart, and having nothing to fear and less to lose, they gave themselves up, without restraint, to their natural tendencies towards vice and excess, in which they continue to live at the present day.

In very early days, however, the separation between Pariahs and the other castes does not appear to have been so marked as at present. Though relegated to the lowest grade in the social scale, they were not then placed absolutely outside and beyond it, the line of demarcation between them and the Sudras being almost imperceptible. Indeed, they are even to this day considered to be the direct descendants of the better class of agricultural labourers. The Tamil *Vellalers* and the *Okkala-makkalu-kanarey* do not disdain to call them their children. But one thing is quite certain, that if these classes share a common origin with the Pariahs and acknowledge the same, their actions by no means corroborate their words, and their treatment of the Pariahs leaves much to be desired.

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Europeans are obliged to have Pariahs for their servants, because no native of any other caste would condescend to do such menial work as is exacted by their masters. For instance, it would be very difficult to find amongst the Sudras any one who would demean himself by blacking or greasing boots and shoes, emptying and cleansing chamber utensils, brushing and arranging hair, &c.; and certainly no one could be found who for any consideration whatever would consent to cook food for them, as this would necessitate touching beef, which is constantly to be seen on the tables of Europeans, who thereby show an open disregard of the feelings and prejudices of the people amongst whom they live. Foreigners are therefore obliged to have recourse to Pariahs to perform this important domestic service. If the kind of food which they do not scruple to eat lowers Europeans in the eyes of the superstitious native, much more are they lowered by the social status of the people by whom they are served. For it is a fact recognized by all Hindus that none but a Pariah would dare to eat food prepared by Pariahs.

It is undeniable that this want of consideration on the part of Europeans—or rather the necessity to which they are reduced of employing Pariahs as servants—renders them most obnoxious to other classes of natives, and greatly diminishes the general respect for the white man. It being impossible to procure servants of a better caste, foreigners have of necessity to put up with members of this inferior class, who are dishonest, incapable of any attachment to their masters, and unworthy of confidence. Sudras who become servants of Europeans are almost invariably vicious and unprincipled, as devoid of all feeling of honour as they are wanting in resource; in fact, they are the scum of their class and of society at large. No respectable or self-respecting Sudra would ever consent to enter a service where he would be in danger of being mistaken for a Pariah, or would have to consort with Pariahs. Amongst other reasons which contribute largely to the dislike that natives of a better class entertain for domestic service under Europeans, is the feeling that their masters keep them at such a great distance, and are generally haughty and even cruel in their demeanour towards them. But above all things they dread being kicked by a European, not because this particular form of ill-treatment is physically more painful than any other, but because they have

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a horror of being defiled by contact with anything so unclean as a leather boot or shoe. Pariahs, accustomed from their childhood to slavery, put up patiently with affronts of this kind which other natives, who have more pride and self-respect, are unable to endure.

Under other circumstances, it should be remarked, domestic service in India is by no means regarded as degrading. The servant has his meals with his master, the maid with her mistress, and both go through life on an almost equal footing. The conduct of Europeans being in this respect so totally different, natives who have any sense of decency or self-respect feel the greatest repugnance to taking service with them. One cannot wonder therefore that only the very dregs of the population will undertake the work.

But to return to the Pariahs. One is bound to confess that the evil reputation which is borne by this class is in many respects well deserved, by reason of the low conduct and habits of its members. A great many of these unfortunate people bind themselves for life, with their wives and children, to the ryots, or agricultural classes, who set them to the hardest labour and treat them with the greatest harshness. The village scavengers, who are obliged to clean out the public latrines, to sweep the streets, and to remove all rubbish, invariably belong to this class. These men, known in the south by the name of *tolis*, are, however, generally somewhat more humanely treated than the other Pariahs, because, in addition to the dirty work above mentioned, they are employed in letting the water into the tanks and channels for irrigating the rice fields; and on this account they are treated with some consideration by the rest of the villagers. Amongst the Pariahs who are not agricultural slaves there are some who groom and feed the horses of private individuals, or those used in the army; some are in charge of elephants; others tend cattle; others are messengers and carriers; while others, again, do ordinary manual work. Within recent times Pariahs have been allowed to enlist in the European and Native armies, and some of them have risen to high rank, for in point of courage and bravery they are in no way inferior to any other caste. Yet their bringing up put them at a great disadvantage in acquiring other qualifications necessary for the making of a good soldier, for they

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are induced with difficulty to conform to military discipline, and are absolutely deficient in all sense of honour[1].

Pariahs, being thus convinced that they have nothing to lose or gain in public estimation, abandon themselves without shame or restraint to vice of all kinds, and the greatest lawlessness prevails amongst them, for which they do not feel the least shame. One might almost say that, in the matter of vice, they outstrip all others in brutality, as the Brahmins do in malice. Their habits of uncleanliness are disgusting. Their huts, a mass of filth and alive with insects and vermin, are, if possible, even more loathsome than their persons. Their harsh and forbidding features clearly reveal their character, but even these are an insufficient indication of the coarseness of their minds and manners. They are much addicted to drunkenness, a vice peculiarly abhorrent to other Hindus. They intoxicate themselves usually with the juice of the palm-tree, called toddy, which they drink after it has fermented, as it is then more spirituous. In spite of its horrible stench they imbibe it as if the nauseous liquid were nectar. Drunken quarrels are of frequent occurrence amongst them, and their wives are often sufferers, the unhappy creatures being nearly beaten to death, even when in a state of pregnancy. It is to this brutality and violence of their husbands that I attribute the frequent miscarriages to which Pariah wives are subject, and which are much more common amongst them than amongst women of any other caste.

What chiefly disgusts other natives is the revolting nature of the food which the Pariahs eat. Attracted by the smell, they will collect in crowds round any carrion, and contend for the spoil with dogs, jackals, crows, and other carnivorous animals. They then divide the semi-putrid flesh, and carry it away to their huts, where they devour it, often without rice or anything else to disguise the flavour. That the animal should have died of disease is of no consequence to them, and they sometimes secretly poison cows or buffaloes that they may subsequently feast on the foul, putrefying remains. The carcases of animals that die in a village belong by right to the *toti* or scavenger, who

[1] The Abbé is too sweeping in many of his statements about Pariahs. For instance, in these days at any rate, the Pariah Sepoys in the Madras army are extremely well disciplined, especially the corps of Sappers.—ED.

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sells the flesh at a very low price to the other Pariahs in the neighbourhood. When it is impossible to consume in one day the stock of meat thus obtained, they dry the remainder in the sun, and keep it in their huts until they run short of other food. There are few Pariah houses where one does not see festoons of these horrible fragments hanging up; and though the Pariahs themselves do not seem to be affected by the smell, travellers passing near their villages quickly perceive it and can tell at once the caste of the people living there. This horrible food is, no doubt, the cause of the greater part of the contagious diseases which decimate them, and from which their neighbours are free.

Is it to be wondered at, after what has just been stated, that other castes should hold this in abhorrence? Can they be blamed for refusing to hold any communication with such savages, or for obliging them to keep themselves aloof and to live in separate hamlets? It is true that with regard to these Pariahs the other Hindus are apt to carry their views to excess; but as we have already pointed out, and shall often have to point out again, the natural instinct of the natives of India seems to run to extremes in all cases.

The condition of the Pariahs, which is not really slavery as it is known amongst us, resembles to a certain extent that of the serfs of France and other countries of Northern Europe in olden times. This state of bondage is at its worst along the coast of Malabar, as are several other customs peculiar to the country[1]. The reason is that Malabar, owing to its position, has generally escaped the invasions and revolutions which have so often devastated the rest of India, and has thus managed to preserve unaltered many ancient institutions, which in other parts have fallen into disuse.

Of these the two most remarkable are proprietary rights and slavery. These two systems are apparently inseparable one from the other: and, indeed, one may well say, *no land without lord.* All the Pariahs born in the country are serfs for life, from father to son, and are part and parcel of the land on which they are born. The land-owner can sell them along with the soil, and can dispose of them when and how he pleases. This proprietary right and this system of serfdom have existed

[1] Things in this respect have, of course, changed a great deal for the better since the Abbé wrote.—ED.

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from the remotest times, and exist still amongst the Nairs, the Coorgs, and the Tulus, the three aboriginal tribes of the Malabar coast. This is, I believe, the only province in India where proprietary right has been preserved intact until the present day. Everywhere else the soil belongs to the ruler, and the cultivator is merely his tenant. The lands which he tills are given to him or taken away from him according to the will of the Government for the time being. On the Malabar coast, however, the lands belong to those who have inherited them from their forefathers, and these in their turn possess the right of handing them down to their descendants. Here the lands may be alienated, sold, given away, or disposed of according to the will of the owners. In a word, the *jus utendi et abutendi*, which is the basis of proprietary right, belongs entirely to them. Every landed proprietor in that country possesses a community of Pariahs to cultivate his fields, who are actually his slaves and form an integral part of his property. All children born of these Pariahs are serfs by birth, just as their parents were; and their master has the right, if he choose, to sell or dispose of parents and children in any way that he pleases. If one of these Pariahs escapes and takes service under another master, his real master can cover him anywhere as his own property. If a proprietor hapens to possess more slaves than he requires for cultivating his land, he sells some to other landlords who are less fortunate than himself. It is by no means uncommon to see a debtor, who is unable to pay his debts in hard cash, satisfy his creditors by handing over to them a number of his Pariah slaves. The price of these is not exorbitant. A male still young enough to work will fetch three rupees and a hundred *seers* of rice, which is about the value of a bullock.

But the landed proprietors do not usually sell their slaves except in cases of great emergency; and even then they can only sell them within the borders of their own country. In no case have they a right to export them for sale to foreigners.

Each land-owner in the province of Malabar lives in a house that is isolated in the middle of his estate. Here he dwells, surrounded by his community of Pariah serfs, who are always remarkably submissive to him. Some land-owners possess over a hundred of them. They treat them usually in the most

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humane manner. They give them only such work as their age or strength permits; feed them on the same rice that they themselves eat; give them in marriage when they come of age; and every year provide them with clothing, four or five yards of cloth for the women and a coarse woollen blanket for the men.

In Malabar it is only the Pariahs who are thus condemned to perpetual slavery; but then there are no free men amongst them. All are born slaves from generation to generation. They have not even a right to buy their own freedom; and if they wish to secure their independence they can only do so by escaping secretly from the country. All the same, I have not heard that they often resort to this extremity. They are accustomed from father to son to this state of servitude; they are kindly treated by their masters; they eat the same food as they do; they are never forced to do tasks beyond their strength; and thus they have no notion of what freedom or independence means, and are happily resigned to their lot. They look upon their master as their father, and consider themselves to belong to his family. As a matter of fact, their physical condition, which is the only thing that appeals to their senses, is much better than that of their brethren who are free. At any rate, the Pariah slave of Malabar is certain of a living, the supreme requirement of nature, whereas the free Pariah of other provinces lives for half his time in actual want of the meanest subsistence, and is often exposed to death from starvation [1].

It is indeed a piteous sight, the abject and half-starved condition in which this wretched caste, the most numerous of all, drags out its existence. It is true that amongst Pariahs it is an invariable rule, almost a point of honour, to spend everything they earn and to take no thought for the morrow. The majority of them, men and women, are never clothed in anything but old rags. But in order to obtain a true idea of their abject

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misery one must live amongst them, as I have been obliged to do. About half of my various congregations consisted of Pariah Christians. Wherever I went I was constantly called in to administer the last consolations of religion to people of this class. On reaching the hut to which my duty led me, I was often obliged to creep in on my hands and knees, so low was the entrance door to the wretched hovel. When once inside, I could only partially avoid the sickening smell by holding to my nose a handkerchief soaked in the strongest vinegar. I would find there a mere skeleton, perhaps lying on the bare ground, though more often crouching on a rotten piece of matting, with a stone or a block of wood as a pillow. The miserable creature would have for clothing a rag tied round the loins, and for covering a coarse and tattered blanket that left half the body naked. I would seat myself on the ground by his side, and the first words I heard would be: 'Father, I am dying of cold and hunger.' I would spend a quarter of an hour or so by him, and at last leave this sad spectacle with my heart torn asunder by the sadness and hopelessness of it all, and my body covered in every part with insects and vermin. Yet, after all, this was the least inconvenience that I suffered, for I could rid myself of them by changing my clothes and taking a hot bath. The only thing that really afflicted me was having to stand face to face with such a spectacle of utter misery and all its attendant horrors, and possessing no means of affording any save the most inadequate remedies.

Oh! if those who are blessed with this world's goods, and who are so inclined to create imaginary troubles for themselves because they have no real ones; if the discontented and ambitious who are always ready to grumble and complain of their fate, because perchance they have only the mere necessaries and are unable to procure the luxuries and pleasures of life; if they would only pause for a moment and contemplate this harrowing picture of want and misery, how much more gratefully would they appreciate the lot that Providence has assigned to them!

As for myself, for the first ten or twelve years that I was in India, I lived in such abject poverty that I had hardly sufficient means to procure the bare necessaries of life; but even then

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I was as happy and contented as I am now that I am better off. Besides the consolations which my religion gave me under these trying circumstances, my reason found me others in the reflection that nineteen-twentieths of the people among whom I was living were bearing far greater trials of all kinds than any that I was called on to endure.

Besides the Pariahs, who are to be found all over the Peninsula, there are in certain provinces other classes composed of individuals who equal and even surpass them in depravity of mind and customs, and in the contempt in which they are held. Such, for instance, is the caste of *Pallers*, who are only found in Madura and in the neighbourhood of Cape Comorin. The *Pallers* consider themselves superior to the Pariahs, inasmuch as they do not eat the flesh of the cow; but the Pariahs look on them as altogether their inferiors, because they are the scum of the Left-hand faction, whilst they themselves are the mainstay of the Right-hand.

These two classes of degraded beings can never agree, and wherever they are found in fairly equal numbers, the disputes and quarrels amongst them are interminable. They lead the same sort of life, enjoy an equal share of public opprobrium, and both are obliged to live far apart from all other classes of the inhabitants.

Amongst the forests on the Malabar coast there lives a tribe which, incredible as it may seem, surpasses the two of which I have just spoken in degradation and squalid misery. They are called *Puliahs*, and are looked upon as below the level of the beasts which share this wild country with them. They are not even allowed to build themselves huts to protect themselves from the inclemencies of the weather. A sort of lean-to, supported by four bamboo poles and open at the sides, serves as a shelter for some of them, and keeps off the rain, though it does not screen them from the wind. Most of them, however, make for themselves what may be called nests in the branches of the thickest-foliaged trees, where they perch like birds of prey for the greater part of the twenty-four hours. They are not even allowed to walk peaceably along the high-roads. If they see any one coming towards them, they are bound to utter a certain cry and to go a long way round to avoid passing him. A hundred paces is the very nearest they may approach any one of a different

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caste. If a Nair, who always carries arms, meets one of these unhappy people on the road, he is entitled to stab him on the spot[1]. The *Puliahs* live an absolutely savage life, and have no communication whatever with the rest of the world.

The *Chucklers*, or cobblers, are also considered inferior to the Pariahs all over the Peninsula, and, as a matter of fact, they show that they are of a lower grade by their more debased ideas, their greater ignorance and brutality. They are also much more addicted to drunkenness and debauchery. Their orgies take place principally in the evening, and their villages resound, far into the night, with the yells and quarrels which result from their intoxication. Nothing will persuade them to work as long as they have anything to drink; they only return to their labour when they have absolutely no further means of satisfying their ruling passion. Thus they spend their time in alternate bouts of work and drunkenness. The women of this wretched class do not allow their husbands to outshine them in any vice, and are quite as much addicted to drunkenness as the men. Their modesty and general behaviour may therefore be easily imagined. The very Pariahs refuse to have anything to do with the *Chucklers*, and do not admit them to any of their feasts.

There is one class amongst the Pariahs which rules all the rest of the caste. These are the *Valluvas*[2], who are called *the Brahmins of the Pariahs* in mockery. They keep themselves quite distinct from the others, and only intermarry in their own class. They consider themselves as the *gurus*, or spiritual advisers, of the rest. It is they who preside at all the marriages and other religious ceremonies of the Pariahs. They predict all the absurdities mentioned in the Hindu almanac, such as lucky and unlucky days, favourable or unfavourable moments for beginning a fresh undertaking, and other prophecies of a like nature. But they are forbidden to meddle with anything pertaining to astronomy, such as the foretelling of eclipses, changes of the moon, &c., this prerogative belonging exclusively to the Brahmins.

There are other classes too, which, though a trifle higher in

[1] No native is nowadays allowed to carry arms without a licence. But even now the Puliahs are forbidden to approach a person of higher caste. They always stand at a distance of 20 to 30 yards.—ED.

[2] These are sometimes physicians and astrologers.—ED.

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the Hindu social scale, are for all that not treated with much more respect. Firstly, amongst the Sudras there are those who follow servile occupations, or at least occupations dependent on the public; secondly, those who perform low and disgusting offices, which expose them to frequent defilements; and, thirdly, there are the nomadic tribes, who are always wandering about the country, having no fixed abode.

Amongst the first I place the barbers and the washermen. There are men belonging to these two employments in every village, and no one exercising the same profession can come from another village to work in theirs without their express permission. Their employments are transmitted from father to son, and those who pursue them form two distinct castes.

The barber's business is to trim the beard, shave the head, pare the nails on hands and feet, and clean the ears of all the inhabitants of his village. In several of the southern provinces the inhabitants have all the hair on different parts of their bodies shaved off, with the exception of the eye-brows; and this custom is always observed by Brahmins on marriage days and other solemn occasions[1]. The barbers are also the surgeons of the country. Whatever be the nature of the operation that they are called on to perform, their razor is their only instrument, if it is a question of amputation; or a sort of stiletto, which they use for paring nails, if they have to open an abscess, or the like. They are also the only accredited fiddlers; and they share with the Pariahs the exclusive right of playing wind instruments, as will be seen presently.

As to the washermen, their business is much the same here as everywhere else, except for the extreme filthiness of the rags that are entrusted to them to be cleaned.

Those engaged in these two occupations are in such a dependent position that they dare not refuse to work for any one who chooses to employ them. They are paid in kind at harvest time by each inhabitant of their village. No doubt the contempt in which they are held by men of other castes, who look upon them as menials, is due partly to this state of sub-

[1] This custom of shaving the hair from all parts of the body, for ceremonies where absolute purity is required, is not peculiar to the Brahmins; it was also common amongst the Jews, for the same reason, and was part of their ceremonial law (Numbers viii. 6, 7).—DUBOIS.

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jection, and also to the uncleanness of the things which they are compelled to handle.

The potters also are a very low class, being absolutely uneducated.

The five castes of artisans, of which I have already spoken, and also, as a rule, all those employed in mechanical or ornamental arts, are very much looked down upon and despised.

The *Moochis*, or tanners, though better educated and more refined than any of the preceding classes, are not much higher in the social scale. The other Sudras never allow them to join in their feasts; indeed, they would hardly condescend to give them a drop of water to drink. This feeling of repulsion is caused by the defilement which ensues from their constantly handling the skins of dead animals.

As a rule, the mechanical and the liberal arts, such as music, painting, and sculpture, are placed on very much the same level, and those who follow these professions, which are left entirely to the lower castes of the Sudras, are looked upon with equal disfavour[1].

As far as I know, only the *Moochis* take up painting as a profession. Instrumental music, and particularly that of wind instruments, is left exclusively, as I have already mentioned, to the barbers and Pariahs[2]. The little progress that is made in these arts is no doubt due to the small amount of encouragement which they receive. As for painting, one never sees anything but daubs. The Hindus are quite satisfied if their artists can draw designs of striking figures painted in the most vivid colours. Our best engravings, if they are uncoloured, or our finest miniatures or landscapes, are quite valueless in their eyes.

Though the Hindus much enjoy listening to music, and introduce it freely into all their public and private ceremonies, both religious and social, yet it must be admitted that this charming art is here still in its infancy. I should say Hindus

[1] Those who follow these liberal arts are treated with more respect in these days. At all events, they are not looked upon with disfavour. There are now many Brahmins in Southern India who are professional musicians, though they play on certain instruments only.—ED.

[2] Classes superior to the barbers and Pariahs also play wind instruments at the present time.—ED.

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are no further advanced in it now than they were two or three thousand years ago. They do not expect their musicians to produce harmonious tunes when they play at their feasts and ceremonies, for their dull ears would certainly not appreciate them. What they like is plenty of noise and plenty of shrill piercing sounds. Their musicians are certainly able to comply with their wishes in this respect. Such discordant noises are infinitely more pleasing to them than our melodious airs, which possess no charm whatever for them. Of all our various instruments, they care only for drums and trumpets. Their vocal music, too, is not a whit more pleasing to European ears than their instrumental. Their songs are chiefly remarkable for uninspiring monotony; and though they have a scale like ours, composed of seven notes, they have not tried to produce from it those harmonies and combinations which fall so deliciously on our ears.

Why is it, it may well be asked, that it should be considered shameful to play on wind instruments in India? I suppose it is on account of the defilement which the players contract by putting such instruments to their mouths after they have once been touched by saliva, which, as I shall show presently, is the one excretion from the human body for which Hindus display invincible horror. There is by no means the same feeling with regard to stringed instruments. In fact, you may often hear Brahmins singing and accompanying themselves on a sort of little harp which is known by the name of *vina*. This instrument has a rather agreeable tone, and would be still more pleasing if the sounds extracted from it were more varied. It has always been a favourite amongst the better classes; and its invention must date from an extremely remote period, for it is often mentioned in Hindu books, where the gods themselves are represented as playing on the *vina* to soothe themselves with its sweet melodies. It is generally taught by Brahmins; and as their lessons are very expensive, and they persuade their pupils that a great many are necessary in order to attain proficiency, it is obvious that none but the rich can afford themselves this pleasure.

The *vina* of the Hindus is probably the same as the *cithara*[1],

[1] The Mahomedans of Northern India have a stringed instrument known as *cithar*.—ED.

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or harp, of the Jews, in playing which King David excelled, and with which he produced those melodies which soothed and calmed his unfortunate master Saul, after God had given Saul up as a prey to his evil passions.

Besides the *vina*, the Brahmins have another stringed instrument called *kinnahra*, which is something like a guitar, and the tone of which is not unpleasant.

The Hindus do not use gut for the strings of their instruments, as Europeans do. They would not dare to touch anything so impure, for if they did they would consider themselves defiled by the contact. To avoid such a serious impurity they use metal strings.

I will now turn to the nomadic castes, which swell the number of wretched and degraded beings amongst the nation I am describing. Without any fixed abode, wandering about from one country to another, the individuals of which these vagabond tribes are composed pay little or no attention to the various customs which are obligatory on every respectable Hindu; and this is why they are so cordially detested.

One of the largest of these castes is that which is known in the south by the name of *Kuravers* or *Kurumarus*. This is subdivided into two branches, one of which carries on a trade in salt. Gangs of men bring this article from the coast and distribute it in the interior of the country, using asses, of which they possess considerable numbers, as their means of transport. As soon as they have sold or bartered this commodity, they reload the asses with different kinds of grain, for which there is a ready sale on the coast, and start off again at once. Thus their whole lives are spent in hurrying from one country to another without settling down in any place.

The occupation of the second branch of these *Kuravers* is to make baskets and mats of osier and bamboo, and other similar utensils which are used in Hindu households. They are obliged to be perpetually moving from one place to another to find work, and are without any fixed abode.

The *Kuravers* are also the fortune-tellers of the country. They speak a language peculiar to themselves, which is unintelligible to any other Hindu. Their manners and customs have much in common with those of the wandering tribes that are known in England as *Gypsies*, and in France as *Egyptians*,

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or Bohemians. Their women tell the fortunes of those who consult them and are willing to pay them. The person who wishes to learn his fate seats himself in front of the soothsayer and holds out his hand, while she beats a little drum, invokes all her gods or evil spirits, and gabbles aloud a succession of fantastic words. These preliminaries over, she studies with the most scrupulous attention the lines on the hand of the simple-minded person who is consulting her, and finally predicts the good or evil fortune that is in store for him. Many attempts have been made to trace the origin of these wandering tribes, who are to be found telling fortunes all over the world. The general opinion appears to be that they originally came from Egypt, but this view might possibly be changed if these *Kuravers* of India were to be closely examined, and their language, manners, and customs compared with those of the Gypsies and Bohemians.

The *Kuraver* women also tattoo the designs of flowers and animals which decorate the arms of most young Hindu women. The tattooing is done by first delicately tracing the desired objects on the skin, then pricking the outline gently with a needle, and immediately after rubbing in the juice of certain plants, whereby the design becomes indelible.

The *Kurumarus* are much addicted to stealing, and from this tribe come the professional thieves and pickpockets known by the name of *Kalla-bantrus*. These people make a study of the art of stealing, and all the dodges of their infamous profession are instilled into them from their youth. To this end their parents teach them to lie obstinately, and train them to suffer tortures rather than divulge what it is to their interest to hide. Far from being ashamed of their profession, the *Kalla-bantrus* glory in it, and when they have nothing to fear they take the greatest pleasure in boasting of the clever thefts they have committed in various places. Those who, caught in the act, have been badly hurt, or who have been deprived by the magistrates of nose, ears, or right hand, show their scars and mutilations with pride, as proofs of their courage and intrepidity; and these men are usually the chosen heads of their caste.

They always commit their depredations at night. Noiselessly entering a village, they place sentinels along the different roads, while they select the houses that can be entered with the least risk. These they creep into, and in a few minutes strip them

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of all the metal vessels and other valuables they can find, including the gold and silver ornaments which the sleeping women and children wear round their necks. They never break open the doors of the houses, for that would make too much noise and so lead to their detection. Their plan is to pierce the mud wall of the house with a sharp iron instrument specially made for the purpose, with which they can in a few moments easily make a hole large enough for a man to creep through. They are so clever that they generally manage to carry out their depredations without being either seen or heard by any one. But if they happen to be surprised, the *Kalla-bantrus* make a desperate resistance and do their best to escape. If one of their number is killed in the scrimmage, they will run any risk to obtain possession of the corpse. They then cut off the head and carry it away with them to avoid discovery.

In the provinces which are governed by native princes, these villains are, to a certain extent, protected by the authorities, who countenance their depredations in return for a stipulated sum, or on condition that they pay the value of half the booty that they steal to the revenue collector of the locality. But as such an understanding could not possibly be anything more than tacit in any civilized country, this infamous arrangement is kept secret. The culprits, therefore, can expect no compensation to be publicly awarded them by the magistrates for the wounds and mutilations which they may suffer in the course of their nocturnal raids; but these same magistrates will do their best to screen or palliate their offences, the profits of which they share, and will always protect their clients from well-deserved punishment when they appear before them in court.

The last Mussulman prince who governed Mysore had a regular regiment of *Kalla-bantrus* in his service, whom he employed, not to fight amongst his troops, but to despoil the enemy's camp during the night, to steal the horses, carry off any valuables they could find amongst the officers' baggage, spike the enemy's guns, and act as spies. They were paid according to their skill and success. In times of peace they were sent into neighbouring States to pilfer for the benefit of their master, and also to report on the proceedings of the rulers. The minor native princes called *Poligars* always employ a number of these ruffians for the same purposes.

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In the provinces where these *Kalla-bantrus* are countenanced by the Government, the unfortunate inhabitants have no other means of protecting themselves from their depredations than by making an agreement with the head of the gang to pay him an annual tax of a quarter of a rupee and a fowl per house, in consideration of which he becomes responsible for all the thefts committed by his people in villages which are thus, so to say, insured [1].

Besides the *Kalla-bantrus* of the *Kurumaru* caste, the province of Mysore is infested by another caste of thieves, called *Kanojis*, who are no less dreaded than the others.

But of all the nomadic castes which wander about the country, the best known and most detested is the *Lambadis*, or *Sukalers*, or *Brinjaris*. No one knows the origin of this caste. The members of it have different manners and customs, and also a different religion and language from all the other castes of Hindus. Certain points of resemblance, however, which are to be found between them and the Mahrattas, lead one to believe that they must have sprung from these people in the first instance, and have inherited from them their propensities for rapine and theft, and their utter disregard for the rights of property when they think they are stronger than their victims and are safe from retributory justice. However, the severe sentences that the magistrates have latterly passed on them in several districts have exercised a salutary influence. They no longer dare to rob and steal openly. But the lonely traveller who meets them in some lonely spot had better beware, especially if they have reason to think that he would be worth plundering.

In time of war they attach themselves to the army where discipline is least strict. They come swarming in from all parts, hoping, in the general disorder and confusion, to be able to thieve with impunity. They make themselves very useful by keeping the market well supplied with the provisions that they have stolen on the march. They hire themselves and their large herds of cattle to whichever contending party will pay them best, acting as carriers of the supplies and baggage of the

[1] This, of course, is no longer allowed. The thieving classes have, under a more rigid system of police, been compelled to take to more lawful pursuits.—ED.

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army. They were thus employed, to the number of several thousands, by the English in their last war with the Sultan of Mysore. The English, however, had occasion to regret having taken these untrustworthy and ill-disciplined people into their service, when they saw them ravaging the country through which they passed and causing more annoyance than the whole of the enemy's army. The frequent and severe punishments that were inflicted on their chiefs had no restraining effect whatever on the rest of the horde. They had been attracted solely by the hope of plunder, and thought little of the regular wages and other inducements which had been promised them.

In times of peace these professional brigands occupy themselves in trading in grain and salt, which they convey from one part of the country to the other on their bullocks; but at the least whisper of war, or the slightest sign of coming trouble, they are at once on the look-out, ready to take advantage in the first moment of confusion of any opportunity for pillaging. In fact, the unfortunate inhabitants of the country fear an invasion of a hostile army far less than they do a sudden irruption of these terrible *Lambadis*.

Of all the castes of the Hindus this particular one is acknowledged to be the most brutal. The natural proclivities of its members for evil are clearly indicated by their ill-favoured, wild appearance and their coarse, hard-featured countenances, these characteristics being as noticeable in the women as in the men. In all parts of India they are under the special supervision of the police, because there is only too much reason for mistrusting them.

Their women are, for the most part, very ugly and revoltingly dirty. Amongst other glaring vices they are supposed to be much addicted to incontinency; and they are reputed to sometimes band themselves together in search of men whom they compel by force to satisfy their lewd desires.

The *Lambadis* are accused of the still more atrocious crime of offering up human sacrifices. When they wish to perform this horrible act, it is said, they secretly carry off the first person they meet. Having conducted the victim to some lonely spot, they dig a hole in which they bury him up to the neck. While he is still alive they make a sort of lamp of dough made of flour, which they place on his head. This they fill with oil, and

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light four wicks in it. Having done this, the men and women join hands, and, forming a circle, dance round their victim, singing and making a great noise, till he expires.

Amongst other curious customs of this odious caste is one that obliges them to drink no water which is not drawn from springs or wells. The water from rivers or tanks being thus forbidden, they are obliged in a case of absolute necessity to dig a little hole by the side of a tank or river and take the water that filters through, which by this means is supposed to become spring water.

Another nomadic caste is that of the *Wuddars*, whose trade is to dig wells, tanks, and canals, and to repair dykes. They, too, have to travel about in search of work. This caste is also much despised. The manners of the individuals composing it are as low as their origin, and their minds as uncultivated as their manners. Their extreme uncouthness may, perhaps, account for the low estimation in which they are held.

In Mysore, and in the north-west of the Carnatic, another caste of nomads is to be met with, known as *Pakanattis*. They speak Telugu, and originally formed part of the caste of *Gollavarus*, or shepherds, and were agriculturists. They took to their present kind of life about a hundred and fifty years ago, and like it so much that it would be impossible to persuade them to change it for any regular occupation. The cause of their secession from the rest of their caste was that one of their headmen was grievously insulted by the governor of the province in which they lived. As they never received any redress at all commensurate with the affront, they determined to avenge themselves by deserting their homes in a body, and thus bringing all the agricultural work of the country to a standstill. From that time to this they have never attempted to return to their former mode of life, but are always wandering from place to place without settling anywhere. Some of their headmen, with whom I have conversed, have told me that they number about two thousand families, half of whom wander through the Telugu country and the rest through Mysore. The headmen meet from time to time to settle the differences which frequently arise amongst the members. However, the *Pakanattis* are the quietest and best behaved of all the wandering tribes. They are kept in excellent order; and though they always go about in

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bands, theft and pillage are unknown amongst them, and if any of them are found guilty of either, they are severely punished by the rest. They are all most miserably poor; the better off possess a few buffaloes and cows, the milk of which they sell, but the greater number of them are professional herbalists. They collect plants, roots, and other things in the different countries that they wander through, such as are used for medicine or dyes, or for salves, &c., for horses and cattle. These they sell in the bazaars, and the little money that they thus earn helps them considerably. They supplement their livelihood by hunting, fishing, begging, and charlatanry.

All these tribes live entirely isolated from the rest of the world, with whom they hold no communication, except in order to obtain the bare necessaries of life. They lead for the most part a pastoral life, and their headmen occasionally possess considerable herds of cattle, consisting of bullocks, buffaloes, and asses. They travel in bands of ten, twenty, thirty, or more families. They shelter themselves under bamboo or osier mats, which they carry everywhere with them. Each family has its own mat tent, seven or eight feet long, four or five feet broad, and three or four feet high, in which father, mother, children, poultry, and sometimes even pigs, are housed, or rather huddled together, this being their only protection against bad weather. They always choose woods or lonely places as sites for their camps, so that no one can see what goes on amongst them. Besides their mat tents and the other necessaries for camping, they always take care to be provided with small stores of grain, as well as with the household utensils necessary for preparing and cooking their food. Those who possess beasts of burden make them carry the greater part of their goods and chattels, but the unfortunate wretches who have no other means of transport are compelled to carry all their worldly possessions, that is to say, the necessaries for housing and feeding themselves. I have seen the husband carrying on his head and shoulders the tent, the provisions, and some earthen vessels, whilst the wife, her body half uncovered, carried an infant on her back, hanging behind her in the upper part of her cotton garment; on her head was the mortar for husking the rice; while following her came a child bending under the weight of the rest of the household chattels.

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I have often seen this sad spectacle, and always with deep feelings of pity. Such is the kind of life which many Hindus are accustomed to, and which they bear without murmuring or complaining, and without even appearing to envy those whose lives are spent in pleasanter places.

Each one of these nomadic tribes has its own habits, laws, and customs; and each forms a small and perfectly independent republic of its own, governed by such rules and regulations as seem best to them. Nothing is known by the outside world of what happens amongst them. The chiefs of each caste are elected or dismissed by a majority of votes. They are commissioned, during the time that their authority lasts, to enforce the caste rules, to settle disputes, and to punish all misdemeanour and crime. But however heinous offences may be, they never involve the penalty of death or mutilation. The guilty person has only either to pay a fine, or suffer a severe flogging or some other corporal punishment. Travelling ceaselessly from one country to another, these vagrant families pay no tax to any Government: the majority possess nothing, and they have consequently no need of the protection of a prince to guard them against spoliation. Further, they have no claims to take before the courts, since they administer justice themselves; and being without any ambition, they ask neither pardon nor favour from any prince. All these nomadic tribes stink in the nostrils of other Hindus, owing to the kind of life which they lead, to the small esteem in which they hold the religious practices observed by other castes, and, lastly, to the vulgar vices to which they are enslaved. But the heaviest indictment against them is their excessive intemperance in eating and drinking. With the exception of cow's flesh, they eat indiscriminately of every kind of food, even the most revolting, such as the flesh of foxes, cats, rats, snakes, crows, &c. Both men and women drink to excess toddy and arrack, i.e. the spirit of the country, and they will consume every kind of liquor and enervating drug which they can procure.

The majority of these vagabonds live in a state of extreme poverty. When no other resource remains to them they beg, or else send their women to earn their livelihood by prostitution.

Among the degraded beings who form the dregs of society in

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India must be classed the jugglers, the charlatans, mountebanks, conjurers, acrobats, rope-dancers, &c. There are two or three castes which practise these professions, travelling from country to country to find patrons or dupes. It is not surprising, with a people so credulous and endued with such a love of the marvellous as the Hindus, that such impostors should abound. They are regarded as magicians and sorcerers, as men versed in witchcraft and all the occult sciences, and are viewed with fear and distrust; while the hatred in which they are held is much greater than is accorded in Europe to people of the same description. Some of these charlatans carry on a trade with a credulous public in quack medicines and universal panaceas. They may often be heard in the street haranguing the multitude and extolling their wares. They even surpass our own quacks in effrontery and barefaced imposture. Others are conjurers or acrobats; and both one and the other perform really astonishing feats of legerdemain and agility. European jugglers would certainly have to lower their colours before them.

The best known of these castes is that of the *Dombers* or *Dombarus*. To the earnings which the men make by their industry the women also add the sums that they gain by the most shameless immorality; their favours, if such a word be applicable, are accorded to any one who likes to pay for them. However, in spite of all this, the *Dombers* lead a wretched life; and their extreme poverty is caused by their boundless intemperance. They always spend in eating and drinking much more than they actually possess; and when all their means are exhausted they have recourse to begging.

Other troops of vagabonds of the same class adopt the profession of travelling actors. I once met a large party who were representing the ten *Avatars* (or incarnations) of Vishnu, on which subject they had composed as many sacred plays. The greater number of them, however, play obscene and ridiculous farces in the streets, with boards and trestles for their stage; or else they exhibit marionettes, which they place in disgusting postures, making them give utterance to the most pitiable and filthy nonsense. These shows are exactly suited to the taste and comprehension of the stupid crowd which forms the audience. Hindu players have learned from experience that

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they can never rivet the attention of the public except at the expense of decency, modesty, or good sense [1].

Some Hindu jugglers turn their attention to snake-charming, especially with cobras, the most poisonous of all. These they teach to dance, or to move in rhythm to music; and they perform what appear to be the most alarming tricks with these deadly reptiles. In spite of all their care and skill it sometimes happens that they are bitten; and this would infallibly cost them their lives, did they not take the precaution to excite the snake every morning, forcing it to bite several times through a thick piece of stuff so that it may rid itself of the venom that re-forms daily in its fangs. They also pose as possessors of the secret of enchanting snakes, pretending that they can attract them with the sound of their flutes. This craft was practised elsewhere in the very earliest times, as may be gathered from a passage in Holy Scripture, where the obstinacy of a hardened sinner is likened to that of a deaf adder that shuts its ears to the voice of the charmer. Be that as it may, I can vouch for it that the pretended power of Hindu snake-charmers is a mere imposture. They keep a few trained tame snakes, which are accustomed to come to them at the sound of a flute, and when they have settled the amount of their reward with the persons who think, or have been persuaded, that there are snakes in the vicinity of their houses, they place one of these tame reptiles in some corner, taking care not to be observed. One of the conditions on which they always insist is that any snake which they charm out of a hole shall not be killed, but shall be handed over to them. This point settled, the charmer seats himself on the ground and begins to play on his flute, turning first to one side, then to the other. The snake, on hearing these familiar sounds, comes out of its hiding-place, and crawls towards its master, gliding quietly into the basket in which it is usually shut up. The charmer then takes his reward and goes off in search of other dupes [2].

[1] At the present time there are many Indian theatrical companies formed somewhat after the fashion of European companies. Their performances, too, have improved a great deal since the Abbé's time.—ED.

[2] Even to this day there is a class of village servants called *Kudimis*, whose business it is to collect medicinal herbs and other plants that might be required by the people. These *Kudimis* are also professional snake-catchers, and are supposed to possess infallible antidotes against snake-poison.—ED.

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I will now give some particulars about the wild tribes which inhabit the jungles and mountains in the south of India. They are divided into several castes, each of which is composed of various communities. They are fairly numerous in many places in the Malabar hills, or Western Ghauts, where they are known by the generic name of *Kadu-Kurumbars*. These savages live in the forests, but have no fixed abode. After staying a year or two in one place they move on to another. Having selected the spot for their temporary sojourn, they surround it with a kind of hedge, and each family chooses a little patch of ground, which is dug up with a sharp piece of wood hardened in the fire. There they sow small seeds, and a great many pumpkins, cucumbers, and other vegetables; and on these they live for two or three months in the year. They have little or no intercourse with the more civilized inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The latter indeed prefer to keep them at a distance from their houses, as they stand in considerable dread of them, looking upon them as sorcerers or mischievous people, whom it is unlucky even to meet. If they suspect a *Kadu-Kurumbar* of having brought about illness or any other mishap by his spells, they punish him severely, sometimes even putting him to death.

During the rains these savages take shelter in miserable huts. Some find refuge in caves, or holes in the rocks, or in the hollow trunks of old trees. In fine weather they camp out in the open. At night each clan assembles at a given spot, and enormous fires are lit to keep off the cold and to scare away wild beasts. Men, women, and children all sleep huddled together anyhow. The poor wretches wear no clothes, a woman's only covering being a few leaves sewn together and tied round the waist. Knowing only of the simple necessities of existence, they find enough to satisfy their wants in the forest. Roots and other natural products of the earth, snakes and animals that they can snare or catch, honey that they find on the rugged rocks or in the tops of trees, which they climb with the agility of monkeys; all these furnish them with the means of satisfying the cravings of hunger. Less intelligent even than the natives of Africa, these savages of India do not possess bows and arrows, which they do not know how to use.

It is to them that the dwellers in the plains apply when they

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require wood with which to build their houses. The jungle tribes supply them with all materials of this kind, in exchange for a few valueless objects, such as copper or brass bangles, small quantities of grain, or a little tobacco to smoke[1].

Both men and women occupy themselves in making reed or bamboo mats, baskets, hampers, and other household articles, which they exchange with the inhabitants of more civilized parts for salt, pepper, grain, &c.

According to the people of the plains, these savages can, by means of witchcraft and enchantments, charm all the tigers, elephants, and venomous snakes which share the forests with them, so that they need never fear their attacks.

Their children are accustomed from their earliest infancy to the hard life to which nature appears to have condemned them. The very day after their confinement the women are obliged to scour the woods with their husbands in order to find the day's food. Before starting they suckle the new-born child, and make a hole in the ground, in which they put a layer of teak leaves. The leaves are so rough that if they rub the skin ever so gently they draw blood. In this hard bed the poor little creature is laid, and there it remains till its mother returns in the evening. On the fifth or sixth day after birth they begin to accustom their infants to eat solid food; and in order to harden them at once to endure inclement weather, they wash them every morning in cold dew, which they collect from the trees and plants. Until the infants can walk, they are left by themselves from morning till night, quite naked, exposed to sun, wind, rain, and air, and buried in the holes which serve them for cradles.

The whole religion of these savages seems to consist in the worship of *bhootams*, or evil spirits, which worship they perform in a way peculiar to themselves. They pay no regard whatever to the rest of the Hindu deities.

Besides the *Kadu-Kurumbars* there is another tribe of savages living in the forests and mountains of the Carnatic, and known by the name of *Irulers*, or in some places *Soligurus*. Their habits are identical with those of the *Kadu-Kurumbars*. They lead the same kind of life, have the same religion, customs, and prejudices; in fact, one

[1] These transactions are now regulated by the forest laws.—ED.

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may say that the difference between the two tribes exists only in name.

In several parts of Malabar a tribe is to be found called the *Malai-Kondigaru*, which, though as wild as those mentioned above, has perhaps a little more in common with civilized humanity. They live in the forests, and their principal occupation is to extract the juice of the palm-tree, part of which they drink, the rest they sell. The women climb the trees to obtain it, and they do so in a surprisingly agile manner. These people always go about naked. The women only wear a little rag, which flutters about in the wind and most imperfectly covers that portion of their bodies which it is supposed to hide. During one of the expeditions which the last Sultan of Mysore made into the mountains, he met a horde of these savages, and was much shocked at their state of nudity; for, however depraved Mahomedans may be in their private life, nothing can equal the decency and modesty of their conduct in public. They are horrified at word or look that even verges on indecency or immodesty, especially on the part of their women. The Sultan therefore caused the headmen of the *Malai-Kondigarus* to be brought before him, and asked them why they and their women did not cover their bodies more decently. They excused themselves on the plea of poverty, and that it was the custom of their caste. Tippu replied that he must require them to wear clothing like the other inhabitants of the country, and that if they had not the means wherewith to buy it, he would every year provide them gratuitously with the cotton cloths necessary for the purpose. The savages, however, though urged by the Sultan, made humble remonstrances, and begged hard to be allowed to dispense with the encumbrance of clothing. They finally told him that if they were forced to wear clothing, contrary to the rules of their caste, they would all leave the country rather than put up with so great an inconvenience; they preferred to go and live in some other distant forest, where they would be allowed to follow their customs unmolested. The Sultan was accordingly obliged to give way.

In and around Coorg is another tribe of savages known by the name of *Yeruvaru*. It is akin to the Pariah caste, and is composed of several communities scattered about in the jungles. These people, however, work for their living, and make them-

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selves useful to the rest of the population. They leave their homes to get food from the more civilized inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who, in return for a small quantity of rice given as wages, make them work hard at agricultural pursuits. The indolence of these savages is such, however, that as long as there is a handful of rice in their huts they absolutely refuse to work, and will only return to it when their supply of grain is entirely exhausted. Nevertheless, the other inhabitants are obliged to keep on good terms with them, because they perform all the hardest manual labour, and because if one of them was affronted or thought himself ill-treated, all the rest of the clan would take his part, and leave their usual abode and hide in the forest. The civilized inhabitants, to whom they are thus indispensable, would not be able to persuade them to resume their work until they had made friendly overtures and agreed to pay damages. These wild yet simple-minded people find it so difficult to procure the bare necessaries of life that they never even think of small luxuries which most other Hindus are so fond of, such as betel, tobacco, oil to anoint their heads, &c. They do not even appear to envy those who enjoy them, and are satisfied if they can get a little salt and pepper to flavour the tasteless vegetables and roots which form the principal part of their food.

All these wild tribes are gentle and peaceable by nature. They do not understand the use of weapons of any sort, and the sight of a stranger is sometimes sufficient to put to flight a whole community. No doubt the climate in which they live is in a great measure responsible for their timid, lazy, and indolent character. They are very unlike the savages who people the vast forests of America or Africa, inasmuch as they do not know what war means, and appear to be quite incapable of returning evil for evil. For, of course, no sane person believes the accusation brought against them that they can injure their neighbours by means of spells and enchantments. Hidden in thick forests, or in dens and caves in the rocks, they fear nothing in the world so much as the approach of a civilized being, and far from envying the happiness which the latter boasts of having found in the society of his fellow-men, they shun any intercourse with him, fearing lest he should try to rob them of their liberty and independence, and lest they should be condemned

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to submit to a civilization which to them is only another term for bondage.

At the same time, these wild tribes of Hindus retain a few of the prejudices of their fellow-countrymen. For instance, they are divided into castes, they never eat beef, they have similar ideas about defilement and purification, and they keep the principal regulations relating to them.

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CHAPTER VI

The Poverty of the Hindus.

INDIA has always been considered a most wealthy and opulent country, more favoured by nature than any other in the world, a land literally flowing with milk and honey, where the soil yields all that is necessary for the existence of its happy people almost without cultivation. The great wealth accumulated by a few of its native princes, the large fortunes so rapidly acquired by many Europeans, its valuable diamond mines, the quality and quantity of its pearls, the abundance of its spices and scented woods, the fertility of its soil, and the, at one time, unrivalled superiority of its various manufactures: all these have caused admiration and wonder from time immemorial. One would naturally suppose that a nation which could supply so many luxuries would surpass all others in wealth.

This estimation of the wealth of India has been commonly accepted in Europe up to the present day; and those who, after visiting the country and obtaining exact and authentic information about the real condition of its inhabitants, have dared to affirm that India is the poorest and most wretched of all the civilized countries of the world, have simply not been believed. Many people in Europe, after reading what various authors have to say about India's manufactures and about the factories which turn out the delicate muslins, fine cloths, and beautiful coloured cottons, &c., which are so much admired all the world over, have supposed that the establishments producing such magnificent stuffs must have supplied models for those which are to be found at Manchester, Birmingham, Lyons, and other towns in Europe. Well, the truth is (and most people are still unaware of the fact) all these beautiful fabrics are manufactured in wretched thatched huts built of mud, twenty

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to thirty feet long by seven or eight feet broad. In such a workroom the weaver stretches his frame, squats on the ground, and quietly plies his shuttle, surrounded by his family, his cow, and his fowls. The instruments he makes use of are extremely primitive, and his whole stock in trade could easily be carried about by one man. Such is, in very truth, an exact picture of an Indian factory. As to the manufacturer himself, his poverty corresponds to the simplicity of his workshop. There are in India two or three large classes whose only profession is that of weaving. The individuals comprising these classes are, for the most part, very poor, and are even destitute of the necessary means for working on their own account. Those who deal in the products of their industry have to go to them, money in hand, and after bargaining with them as to the price, quality, and quantity of the goods required, are obliged to pay them in advance. The weavers then go and buy the cotton and other necessaries with which to begin work. Their employers have to supervise their work and keep a sharp look-out lest they decamp with the money, especially if the advances happen to be in any way considerable.

As regards the condition of the Hindus generally, I think that the following account may make things plain. It is based on a long acquaintance with the inhabitants of a large tract of country. Still, the casual observer may find fault with it if he judges it by what he has noticed in large towns, more especially on the coast. There, at least, most of the natives possess houses of more or less value which they can dispose of if necessary, an advantage not shared by the rural classes. Besides, the towns are the rendezvous of the rich and industrious, and of those who intend to become so by fair means or foul, so it is not surprising to find a higher standard of comfort prevailing there. It is from experience of the masses of the population that I have been able to present this sketch of the different degrees of poverty or wealth amongst the people.

I should class the inhabitants of the Indian Peninsula in the following manner. The first and lowest class may be said to be composed of all those whose property is below the value of £5 sterling. This class appears to me to comprise nine-twentieths, or perhaps even a half, of the entire population. It includes most of the Pariah class and nearly all the *Chucklers*

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(leather-workers); and these together form at least a quarter of the population. To them must be added a considerable portion of the Sudras, all the poorest members of the other castes, and the multitude of vagrants, beggars, and impostors who are to be met with everywhere.

Most of the natives of this class hire themselves out as agricultural labourers, and are required to do the hardest manual labour for the smallest possible wage. In the places where they are paid in coin, they receive only just enough to buy the coarsest of food. Their wage varies from twelve to twenty rupees a year, according to locality. They are better paid along the coast. With this amount they are obliged to feed and clothe themselves. In some places they are paid half in coin and half in grain, or else they get their keep, and over and above that receive from four to eight rupees a year[1].

Some of the younger members of this class hire themselves out without wages, on condition that, after working faithfully for seven or eight years, their master will provide them with a wife of their own caste and defray all nuptial expenses. Married servants who are fed by their masters carry home their daily rations. This food is supposed to be sufficient for the wants of one person, or, to quote the native saying, 'to be enough to fill the belly'; but they have to share it with their wives and children, who also have to work and thus add to the provision. When they are in actual want, as often happens, they go and seek for food in the woods, or on the banks of the rivers and tanks, where they find leaves, shrubs, roots, and herbs. These they boil, as often as not without even salt or any kind of condiment; and this primitive food forms, for the greater part of the year, the most substantial part of their meals. Clumps of bamboo abound in the woods, and its shoots form, for two or three months of the year, a great resource to the poor people who live near the places where it grows.

As soon as the children belonging to the class living in a state of servitude have reached the age of eight or nine, they join the same master who employs their father, the boys

[1] The scale is higher everywhere nowadays, but so also is the cost of food-stuffs. Nowhere in India does the common labourer earn much more than a 'living wage.'—ED.

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looking after the cattle and the girls sweeping out the byres, collecting the dung, grinding the grain, &c.

The well-to-do cultivators always employ men of this class; and, in order to keep them in perpetual bondage, they lend them money either on the occasion of a marriage or for other purposes. The poor wretches find themselves, on account of their small wages, quite unable to pay back the capital thus advanced, and in many cases even the interest, which soon exceeds the original loan, and are therefore reduced to the necessity of working, with their wives and children, until the end of their days. From the time this happens their masters look upon them as actual slaves, and refuse to grant them manumission until they have repaid both the principal and interest of the sum which they or their fathers borrowed perhaps twenty or thirty years before.

Those natives belonging to this class who are in a state of independence live by various industries. The greater number are carriers and coolies, or casual agricultural labourers in receipt of a small daily wage. The last-named are generally paid in grain, but when they receive money their wage varies from a penny to twopence a day, according to the district. However, they only work in proportion to their wage, and, whatever the task, a good European workman would, in most cases, do as much as four natives. But as the independent labourer is often out of work, and as the smallness of his wage or his improvidence does not allow of his putting by anything, his lot is no better, perhaps even worse, than that of his brother in slavery, and he is often in absolute want. Most of them have nothing of their own, or at the best only a wretched hut twelve or fifteen feet long by five or six broad, and from four to five feet high, which is full of insects and vermin and exhales an awful stench. Into this hovel they, with their wives and children, crowd higgledy-piggledy. Their belongings consist of a few earthen vessels, one or two sickles, and the rags in which they stand. Those who are a little less poverty-stricken have a brass lotah for drinking purposes, and another out of which they eat, a hoe, two or three sickles, a few silver bracelets, worth three or four rupees, belonging to the women, and two or three cows[1]. These people are agriculturists and

[1] Many Hindus own a few oxen and cattle, which are supposed to be the most valuable part of their property; in fact their degree of comfort

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farm Government lands, on which they pay a tax varying from two to twenty-five shillings.

Such, in truth, is the state of misery in which half the population of India passes its life[1].

I place in the second class all those whose property ranges from £5 to £25 sterling. This class, I should say, includes about six-twentieths of the entire population and is composed chiefly of Sudras. Those included in it are mostly agriculturists on their own account. Their poverty does not allow of their hiring others to work under them. They cultivate Government land, and pay a yearly tax of from one to twenty pagodas, according to the value of the land. They sometimes require as many as three ploughs. Their entire property consists of a few cattle, a few small gold and silver trinkets, one or two copper vessels for drinking and a few more for eating purposes, and some iron farm implements. They live in thatched mud huts, rather more commodious and a little less filthy than those previously described. Weavers, barbers, washermen, and other workmen who cater for the wants of the public may also, for the most part, be included under this head.

The cultivators of this second class, although better off than those of the first, find it hard to make both ends meet even in the best seasons. They are obliged to sell at least half their crop beforehand at low prices, to enable them to pay their taxes, and the miserly usurers who profit by their poverty

is judged, more or less, by the number of these valuable animals which they possess. As soon as a Hindu has acquired a sufficient sum of money, he spends it as a rule on a pair of draught oxen and a cow. But the intrinsic value of these animals is small. The country oxen are, as a rule, stunted, weak, and incapable of enduring much fatigue. Four or five rupees is their outside value.—DUBOIS.

[1] In this connexion the reader will do well to refer to an excellent Blue Book entitled, *Progress of the Madras Presidency during the Forty Years from* 1853 *to* 1892, by Dewan Bahadur S. Srinivasa Raghavaiengar, C.I.E., a distinguished Government official, who clearly proves therein that a very great advance has been made by the country during the last four decades. Emigration also offers large fields of profitable employment to the Indian coolie nowadays—Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, Africa, the West Indies, Mauritius, &c., all competing for his services. The difficulty is to induce him to leave his miserable home. Those who do emigrate sometimes return with comparatively large savings, and become either petty shopkeepers or petty cultivators.—ED.

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leave them hardly sufficient for the wants of their family during six or eight months of the year; in fact, many of them have only food enough to last four months. Some never even gather the harvest from the field they have sown, for as soon as the corn has formed in the ear they are day by day driven by hunger to cut off some of the green ears, with which they make a sort of soup. Consequently, by harvest time there is nothing but stubble left to gather, and to save themselves the trouble of cutting it they merely turn three or four cows into the field to graze. If by dint of self-denial they allow their crops to grow up intact, it is not they who benefit by them, for as soon as the grain has been threshed the money-lenders step in and take their due, and afterwards come those who lent them grain when they had nothing to eat, and demand payment of the original quantity plus twenty-five per cent. interest; that is to say, a man borrowing twenty measures of corn has to repay twenty-five.

The grain takes about four months to ripen, and this period is called *the time of prosperity*, or *sukha kala*. It is about the only season in the year when the poor have enough of even the coarsest kinds of food, consisting of various sorts of small pulse, much the same as that which is used in Europe to fatten pigs and fowls, and in India to feed horses. Hence the well-known proverb, 'Do not approach a Pariah during the *sukha kala* season, nor go within range of an ox during the *Divuligai*[1].' This is because both become unmanageable then, from an unwonted state of prosperity.

In most provinces those who cultivate rice do not eat it, but sell it to pay their taxes. During the four months the *sukha kala* lasts, they live on the pulse and millet which they cultivate in their fields. During the rest of the year their only daily sustenance, in almost all cases, consists of a plateful of millet, seasoned with a little pounded salt and chillies. When after paying their taxes and debts they come to the end of their store of grain, supposing there has been any remnant, they are reduced to living from hand to mouth. Some of them borrow grain, which they promise to repay with interest after

[1] This feast will be specially mentioned later on. Its celebration takes place in November, when the country is clothed in verdure.—DUBOIS. It is also called *Deepavali* and *Diwali*.—ED.

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the next harvest; others explore the woods and the banks of rivers and tanks in search of leaves, bamboo shoots, wild fruits, roots, and other substances which help them to exist, or rather, prevent them from dying of hunger.

Thus for about three months of the year almost three-quarters of the inhabitants of the Peninsula are on the verge of starvation. In the south these three months are July, August, and September; and the saying is that those who have grain to eat then are as happy as princes. The scarcity begins to be less felt by October, for then several of the smaller species of grain are ready for harvesting, and the rains have brought out in the fields quantities of edible herbs, which suffice to allay the pangs of hunger.

Nor are men alone exposed to want during a great part of the year; domestic animals have to bear the same privations. Most families own cattle, and each hamlet possesses considerable herds which can only graze within the narrow limits assigned to them. The small amount of straw which the crops produce does not last long, and the animals are then reduced to nibbling at the few plants scattered here and there in the barren fields. During the three or four months when the sun is especially hot, all vegetable life is scorched up, and the wretched animals can scarcely find enough fodder for their daily sustenance. They may then be seen searching for clayey soil, impregnated with salt, which they proceed to lick with avidity, and that, together with the water they drink, comprises almost all their food. This is why, throughout the hot weather, they are mere skeletons and can hardly stand. I have often, at this time of the year, been in villages where there were more than a hundred cows, and yet sometimes I could not procure so much as half a measure of milk for my breakfast[1].

Thirdly, I may reckon together those Hindus whose property varies in value from £25 to £50 sterling. They comprise about one-tenth of the population, and are principally agricultural. They farm lands large enough to require two, three, or even four ploughs, and their rental is from ten to thirty pagodas. This

[1] The fact is, the slaughter of cattle being forbidden by the Hindu religion, large herds of old and useless animals are maintained, which deprive the healthy and useful animals of their proper share of food.—ED.

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class lives in fairly comfortable circumstances, and most of the people are able to lay in sufficient grain for the whole year after meeting their taxes. Many of them have even more than they require for their own consumption, and are able to sell or lend the surplus to those in their village who have run short of food. We have seen on what outrageous terms these loans are effected. The well-to-do amongst them employ as servants one or more of those who come under the first class. They have larger, more comfortable, and slightly cleaner thatched dwellings than the others, and they and their wives have at least a change of raiment, which is more than rare in the two preceding classes. But even their possessions are far from betokening wealth; they consist of a few gold and silver trinkets, some copper vessels, and a great many earthenware pots piled up in a corner of the house; and besides these they own ploughs and other farming implements, some cotton-spinning wheels, and various primitive tools of small value. Cattle are their chief source of wealth. As to their comfort, it is at best a relative term, for the contraction of debts is a custom common to all the Hindus we have hitherto spoken of. Most of them are debtors as well as creditors, but their assets seldom exceed their liabilities, and they are in no greater hurry to pay their creditors than their debtors are to pay them.

Besides tilling the land, many Hindus of this class keep goats and sheep, and their young, added to the one or two calves they are able to sell from time to time, bring in a small income. Two or three milch-kine and one or two buffaloes supply them with a certain quantity of butter for four or five months in the year, of which they make good use. The sale of pigs, fowls, eggs, &c., also contributes to their support, and even enables them to save for future needs, or to meet matrimonial expenses. Nevertheless, after a bad harvest numbers of these cultivators are reduced to the same state of want as those below them, and are obliged to have recourse to the same shifts.

In these times of distress the Hindu have only their wonderful constitutions to fall back upon. Accustomed from their earliest infancy to privations of every kind, they are able to keep body and soul together on the smallest pittance of food. A pound a day of millet flour, boiled in water and reduced to a thin gruel, is enough to prevent a family of five or six

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persons from dying of hunger. With no food besides this gruel and water the majority of the natives manage to keep hale and hearty for months together. Furthermore, they possess the no less valuable faculty of sleeping at will. An idle Hindu invariably goes to sleep, and so does the man who has nothing to eat. If the homely proverb 'he who sleeps dines' can be taken literally, the Hindus certainly find consolation in it in times of scarcity.

The fourth class comprises those whose property varies in value from £50 to £100 sterling, and I should say it forms three-fortieths of the population. These people live in comfort, being chiefly Brahmins or well-to-do Sudras. They all keep servants belonging to the lowest class to aid them in cultivation. Besides this, some of them are rich enough to embark on commercial speculations in connexion with grain or other commodities, while others lend small sums of money at high interest. This class provides the villages with their Sudra headmen, and these men are at the same time the largest holders of Government lands. They also exercise in their villages the functions of collectors of revenue, petty magistrates, and public arbitrators. As they are usually held responsible by Government for the due payment of all taxes levied on their villages, they are obliged to conciliate the villagers, to prevent their secretly migrating elsewhere, which would mean the non-cultivation of the land, and consequent inability on their part to furnish the revenue due to the State. These men have quite a patriarchal authority in their villages, but those who attempt to abuse their power are soon confronted with deserted homesteads, waste lands, and ruin staring them in the face.

A striking example of this happened when a new and detested system was established by the creation of Muttadars, or hereditary farmers of revenue, which caused the ruin of most of the districts where it was enforced. No sooner were these Muttadars raised to what they considered an exalted position than they began to give themselves great airs and tried to carry things with a high hand. Men who had formerly been in a low position, or in obscurity, now indulged in horses, palanquins, trumpeters, and peons; in fact they gave themselves up, without any justification, to such pomp and splendour as the native

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delights in. As the crops produced by the lands whose revenue they had farmed could not possibly defray the cost of this expensive mode of life, they had recourse to a system of black-mailing to increase their incomes. The consequence of this arbitrary and unprecedented behaviour was the flight of their victims, who left the lands uncultivated. The final result was the ruin of the Muttadars.

The Sudra headmen of the villages are usually sensible, polite, and well-educated men. Most of them know how to read and write. Although they have the failings, common to all natives, of cunning and deceit, they are far from being proud, intolerant, and haughty like the Brahmins. By nature they are gentle, shy, and insinuating, and they behave with marked respect and submission towards their superiors. Towards their equals they are polite and complaisant, and towards their inferiors affable and condescending. In fact, they know well how to adapt themselves to their surroundings.

The class occupying the fourth rung on the ladder which I have used to describe the various degrees of civilization in India is the one which, to my mind, is the most respectable and the most interesting. It is this class, chiefly, which influences public opinion amongst the Sudras, and maintains order throughout all ranks of society. One can tell at a glance that the natives of this class are all well-to-do and independent. As a rule, they are a more polite, better-educated, and better-mannered race, and they look happier and more contented than the members of the other three classes. Most of the latter have thin, drawn faces, a heavy carriage, coarse minds, low manners, and a melancholy and stupid appearance, all of which bespeak plainly enough the privations and sufferings of their lot. Just the reverse is noticeable amongst the natives of the fourth class.

In the fifth class I should include all those whose property varies in value from £100 to £200 sterling. It comprises about one-thirtieth of the whole population, and is composed chiefly of Brahmins or Vaisyas, and of the wealthiest among the Sudras. Agriculture, trading in grain or other commodities, money-lending on such usurious terms as twenty-five, thirty, and even fifty per cent.: such are the different forms of livelihood they thrive upon. Their cleanly appearance betokens comfort,

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and most of them live in tiled houses. They are also careful to conform to the rules of polite society. They perform daily ablutions, and their houses are kept ceremoniously clean by smearing the floors regularly with cow's dung. To appear more worthy in the eyes of the public the Sudras of this class usually abstain from all animal food, and, in imitation of the Brahmins, live entirely on milk and vegetables.

The natives belonging to this and the following classes constitute what may be called the gentlefolk of Hindu society, and some of the faults which characterize the Brahmins, such as pride and intolerance, are noticeable in them. Those amongst them who are agriculturists do not till their own lands, unless very urgent works are necessary; they employ servants from the lowest class to do it for them.

The sixth class may be said to comprise individuals whose tangible property varies in value from £200 to £500 sterling, and it represents, I should say, about one-fiftieth of the population. Brahmins form quite half of this class, and the remainder is made up of the best representatives of the other castes. Their wealth consists partly of *maniams*, or hereditary lands exempt from taxation, partly of gardens planted with arecas, cocoanut and other fruit trees, and partly also of trinkets, money, and cattle. Besides this, they speculate in the same way as the natives of the preceding class. Some of them occupy the position of assistant collectors of public revenue, magistrates' clerks, and other posts in the public service. They are proud of the comfort they enjoy, and their arrogance is unrivalled.

Properties valued at more than £500 sterling are rarely to be met with in the villages. Natives who possess more than this live in *agraharams*, or Brahmin villages, in towns, or in district boroughs, where they have more opportunity for commercial speculations, and for furthering their ambitious schemes to procure posts under Government.

The seventh class may be said to be composed of those whose property varies in value from £500 to £1,000 sterling. I should say only one-hundredth part of the population belongs to this class, and at least half of them are Brahmins. The rest are the wealthiest among the Vaisyas and Sudras.

The eighth class includes those whose properties range in

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value from £1,000 to £2,000 sterling, and it comprises one two-hundredths of the population. It is almost entirely composed of Brahmins, with a small percentage of Vaisyas and Sudras, who live in towns and capitals where they devote themselves almost entirely to commerce or are employed under Government. Properties valued at five to ten thousand pagodas are extremely rare, even in the towns, and are confined to the richest merchants and to those who have held for a long time the highest offices under Government. Still, there are some which exceed even ten thousand pagodas, but these are so few that they can easily be counted in each province.

Speaking generally, the following proportion may be established between properties in India and properties in Great Britain:—

India.		*Great Britain.*
Those of £500 to £1,000	correspond to	£5,000 to £10,000
,, £1,000 to £2,000	,,	£10,000 to £20,000
,, £2,000 to £5,000	,,	£20,000 to £50,000
,, £5,000 to £10,000	,,	£50,000 to £100,000
,, £10,000 and above	,,	£100,000 and above.

But a difference, more essential even than that between the characters of the two nations, is observable in connexion with properties. In Europe they are preserved intact, and are, with but few exceptions, transmitted from father to son generation after generation. In India, on the other hand, there is nothing permanent about them, especially among the Sudras. The latter make their money either by their industry, talents, or cunning, and once it is made they do not know how to spend it wisely. Realizing that, do what they may, they will necessarily be looked down upon as parvenus, they soon acquire all the characteristic vices of the *nouveaux riches*. In time they become as proud and arrogant as any Brahmin, and their sole object seems to be to win a name for lordly extravagance. Money becomes no object to them, so long as it procures the gratification of their vanity. Immense fortunes seldom survive the second generation, owing to the manner in which the sons foolishly squander the wealth laboriously gained by their fathers. It is not uncommon to find sons who have inherited millions from their father end their days in beggary.

A native's house is besieged as soon as he is known to be a wealthy man, and this not only by his own relatives, but also

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by the indigent of his caste, and by a horde of parasites of every description, including poverty-stricken Brahmins, religious mendicants, ballad-mongers, and low flatterers, who feed his vanity by writing odes to his honour and glory, and by lavishing on him praise of the most fulsome nature. All these dependants stick to the wealthy native like leeches, fighting with each other as to who shall carry off the largest share of the prize, and never releasing their hold on their victim until they have stripped him of everything.

As to the general condition of the natives now, as compared with what it was thirty years ago, the question arises, has it improved or has it deteriorated? I have occasionally heard this important question discussed amongst thoughtful and well-informed Europeans, but they could rarely agree with one another on the subject. Some maintained that the masses are enjoying greater prosperity than ever they did before; others that they have never been in a more wretched state; while a few hold that things are practically where they were before the change of government took place. But it is evidently absurd to suppose that a well-meaning, just, and equitable Government, which has succeeded one that was arbitrary, oppressive, and tyrannical, has produced no amelioration in the condition of the people, whatever peculiarities of character and disposition the latter may possess, and however great an obstacle their institutions may be to the philanthropic endeavours of the new *régime* to make their lives more bearable, if not actually happier. This commonsense view of the case is borne out by my own observations. To me it seems undeniable that the condition of the people has improved in many important directions at least, and I have found that the most sensible natives themselves admit it. I do not mean to imply that the lowest classes in the land are better off, for in some provinces close observation will reveal an increase of misery: but where that is the case, I attribute it to causes beyond the power of any Government to prevent or put an end to; and further, I think that, given the same causes, the misery would have been more acute under the old *régime*.

Of these causes the chief one is the rapid increase of the population. Judging by my own personal knowledge of the poorer Christian populations in Mysore and in the districts

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of Baramahl and Coimbatore, I should say that they have increased by twenty-five per cent. in the last twenty-five years. During this period Southern India has been free from the wars and other decimating calamities which had been dealing havoc almost uninterruptedly for centuries before.

Some modern political economists have held that a progressive increase in the population is one of the most unequivocal signs of a country's prosperity and wealth. In Europe this argument may be logical enough, but I do not think that it can be applied to India; in fact, I am persuaded that as the population increases, so in proportion do want and misery. For this theory of the economists to hold good in all respects the resources and industries of the inhabitants ought to develop equally rapidly; but in a country where the inhabitants are notoriously apathetic and indolent, where customs and institutions are so many insurmountable barriers against a better order of things, and where it is more or less a sacred duty to let things remain as they are, I have every reason to feel convinced that a considerable increase in the population should be looked upon as a calamity rather than as a blessing.

It is in the nature of things that, in times of peace and tranquillity, when the protection of a just Government is afforded both to person and property, an increase in the population of India should take place at an alarming rate, since it is an indisputable fact that no women in the world are more fruitful than the women of India, and nowhere else is the propagation of the human race so much encouraged. In fact, a Hindu only marries to have children, and the more he has the richer and the happier he feels. All over India it is enough for a woman to know how to cook, pound rice, and give birth to children. These three things are expected of her, especially the last, but nothing more. It would even appear displeasing if she aspired to anything else. No Hindu would ever dream of complaining that his family was too large, however poor he might be, or however numerous his children. A barren woman is made to feel that there can be no worse fate, and barrenness in a wife is the most terrible curse that can possibly fall on a family.

Another serious cause of the poverty of modern India is the decrease in the demand for hand labour, resulting from the

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introduction of machinery and the spread of manufactures with improved methods in Europe. Indeed, Europe no longer depends on India for anything, having learnt to beat the Hindus on their own ground, even in their most characteristic industries and manufactures, for which from time immemorial we were dependent on them. In fact, the *rôles* have been reversed, and this revolution threatens to ruin India completely.

Just before returning to Europe I travelled through some of the manufacturing districts, and nothing could equal the state of desolation prevailing in them. All the work-rooms were closed, and hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants, composing the weaver caste, were dying of hunger; for through the prejudices of the country they could not adopt another profession without dishonouring themselves. I found countless widows and other women out of work, and consequently destitute, who used formerly to maintain their families by cotton-spinning. Wherever I went the same melancholy picture confronted me.

This collapse in the cotton industry has indirectly affected trade in all its branches by stopping the circulation of money, and the cultivators can no longer reckon on the manufacturers who, in the days of their prosperity, were wont to buy up their surplus grain, and even to lend them money when they were in arrears with their taxes. This has led the cultivators to the hard necessity of relinquishing their grain to, and thus becoming the prey of, remorseless usurers.

Such is the deplorable condition into which the poor Hindus have sunk; and it grows worse daily, thanks to the much-vaunted improvements in machinery which some nations glory in. Ah! if only the inventors of these industrial developments could hear the curses which this multitude of poor Hindus never tire of heaping upon them! If only, like me, they had seen the frightful misery which has overtaken whole provinces, owing entirely to them and their inventive genius, they would no doubt, unless they were entirely wanting in human pity, bitterly repent having carried their pernicious innovations so far, and having thereby enriched a handful of men at the expense of millions of poor people, to whom the very name of their competitors has become odious as the sole cause of their utter destitution!

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And let no one venture to assert that the unfortunate Hindus can, if they choose, find a recompense in the fertility of their soil. The sight of vast plains lying fallow and waste may induce the superficial observer to accuse the natives of indolence or the Government of mismanagement, but he is not aware that the greater part, if not the whole, of these vast plains are sterile, bare, and incapable of cultivation through want of water during most of the year. In Southern India, at the present time, there are few lands in the neighbourhood of wells, tanks, and rivers which are not under cultivation, even on the summits of the highest hills; and if by any chance a few fields still lie unreclaimed, it is due to the hopeless sterility of the soil, which, even in the best seasons, would never repay the labourer for his trouble, or else because, to yield any profit at all, they would require more capital and more courage than most of the people possess.

It is, to my mind, a vain hope to suppose that we can really very much improve the condition of the Hindus, or raise their circumstances of life to the level prevailing in Europe. The efforts of a Government which is humane and generous, as well as just, may succeed up to a certain point in lessening some of their hardships; but as long as it is in the nature of the Hindus to cling to their civil and religious institutions, to their old customs and habits, they must remain what they have always been, for these are so many insurmountable obstacles in the path of progress and to the attainment of a new order of things better calculated to bring them happiness. They will continue to grovel in poverty as long as their physical and intellectual faculties continue in the same groove.

Therefore, to make a new race of the Hindus, one would have to begin by undermining the very foundations of their civilization, religion, and polity, and by turning them into atheists and barbarians. Having accomplished this terrible upheaval, we might then perhaps offer ourselves to them as law-givers and religious teachers. But even then our task would be only half accomplished. After dragging them out of the depths of barbarism, anarchy, and atheism into which we had plunged them, and after giving them new laws, a new polity, and a new religion, we should still have to give them new natures and different inclinations. Otherwise we should run the risk of

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seeing them soon relapse into their former state, which would be worse, if anything, than before.

Let our theoretical philanthropists, with their mistaken and superficial notions concerning the genius and character of the Hindus and the varied and multitudinous social links that bind them together, exclaim as much as they please in their unreflecting enthusiasm, that nothing has been done for the physical and spiritual improvement of the race. My reply is, 'Why do you expound your shallow theories in Europe? Come and study the question on the spot. Make personal inquiry into the manners and customs of the people; realize for yourselves whether all possible means have been tried with a view to gaining this desirable end. And then, but not till then, make up your minds on the question.'

Since our European ways, manners, and customs, so utterly different from theirs, do not allow of our winning their confidence, at least let us continue to earn their respect and admiration by humane examples of compassion, generosity, and well-doing. Let us leave them their cherished laws and prejudices, since no human effort will persuade them to give them up, even in their own interests, and let us not risk making the gentlest and most submissive people in the world furious and indomitable by thwarting them. Let us take care lest we bring about, by some hasty or imprudent course of action, catastrophes which would reduce the country to a state of anarchy, desolation, and ultimate ruin, for, in my humble opinion, the day when the Government attempts to interfere with any of the more important religious and civil usages of the Hindus will be the last of its existence as a political power.

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CHAPTER VII

The Mythical Origin of the Brahmins. — Their Name and their Original Founders.—Conjectures on their True Origin.—Buddhists and Jains.

THE real origin of the Brahmins is wrapped in mystery, and one can only hazard conjectures on the subject, or put belief in myths. The story most generally accepted says that they were born from Brahma's head, which accounts for their name. One would suppose that as all castes were born from this same father they would be privileged to bear the same name; but as the Brahmins were the first-born, and issued from the noblest part of the common parent, they claimed special privileges from which all others were rigorously excluded. They have another theory to bear out the accepted belief that no one else is entitled to the illustrious name of Brahmin. They say that no one knows anything about Brahma's attributes and virtues beyond what they themselves choose to teach mankind, and that this knowledge in itself gives them the right to bear his name. Anyhow, their name is undoubtedly derived from Brahma's. The old writers call them 'Brahmanahas,' or 'Brahmahas,' which some of the Latin authors turned into 'Brachmanes.' The great difference between their caste and all others is that a Brahmin only becomes a Brahmin after the ceremony of the triple cord, which will be described hereafter. Until this essential ceremony has been performed he ranks only as a Sudra. By mere birth he is no different from the rest of his race; and it is for this reason that he is called *Dvija* (*Bis genitus*, or Twice-born). His first birth only gives him his manhood, whereas the second raises him to the exalted rank of Brahmin, and this by means of the ceremony of the triple cord. Indeed, two out of the seven famous Penitents, who are supposed to have been the original founders of the various sects of Brahmins of the present day, did not originally belong to this

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caste at all; but by reason of the length and austerity of their term of penance, they were rewarded by having their state of penitent Kshatriyas changed to that of penitent Brahmins by the investiture of the triple cord. These seven Penitents, or *Rishis*, or *Munis*, of Hindu history (I shall often refer to them in the pages of the present work) are the most celebrated personages recognized by the people of India. Their names are Kasyapa, Atri, Bharadwaja, Gautama, Viswamitra, Jamadagni, and Vasishta. The last-named and Viswamitra are those who were considered worthy of being admitted into the high caste of Brahmins. These far-famed Rishis must be of great antiquity, for they existed even before the Vedas, which allude to them in several places. They were the favoured of the gods, and more especially of Vishnu, who at the time of the Deluge made them embark on a vessel which he piloted, and thereby saved them from destruction. Even the gods were called to account for having offended these holy men, who did not hesitate to curse the deities who committed infamies.

The seven Penitents, after setting a virtuous example on earth, were finally translated to heaven, where they occupy a place amongst the most brilliant constellations. They are to be recognized in the seven stars that form the Great Bear, which, according to Hindu tradition, are neither more nor less than the seven famous Rishis themselves. They are, according to Hindu legend, the ancestors of the Brahmins in reality and not by metamorphosis, and it is believed that without ceasing to shine in the firmament, they can, and occasionally do, revisit the earth to find out what is occurring there.

Are there any families in Europe which can, notwithstanding the mythical origins which heraldic science professes to discover, pride themselves on the possession of such ancestors? And seeing that in our own aristocracy a man with a noble lineage is not above assuming an air of extreme *hauteur* and exclusiveness, we ought not to be surprised at a Brahmin's vanity or at the contempt with which he treats any one belonging to an inferior caste. This idea of handing down to posterity the names of their great men by immortalizing them, and assigning to them a place among the constellations, appears to have been an almost universal practice amongst ancient races.

Astronomy has played an important part in the history of

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almost all idolatrous nations; and of all false creeds it certainly is the least unreasonable, and has survived the longest. The religious and political lawgivers of these races were clever enough to perceive that the worship of the stars had taken a great hold upon mankind, and that the simplest and most effectual way of perpetuating the memory of their heroes would be to transform them into outward objects that were always before the eyes of the people. It was thus that the Greeks and Romans consecrated the memory of their divinities and demi-gods; and no doubt the Hindu lawgivers were prompted to immortalize their seven Rishis by means of the brightest stars in the sky because they realized that a Hindu imagination is only appealed to through the visible, and therefore that was the best way to perpetuate the veneration due to these illustrious beings. But whatever may have been the claims of Brahmins to a celestial origin, it is a well-authenticated fact that neither their caste nor any other existed in the countries to the north-east of Bengal four or five centuries ago. About that time the inhabitants of those parts, thinking that it might be to their advantage to adopt the customs of their neighbours, began to clamour for Brahmins. Accordingly, some were made to order out of the youths of the country, who, after conforming to the customs and rites of the Brahmins, were incorporated into their caste by the investiture of the triple cord. The descendants of these ready-made Brahmins have ever since been considered on an equality with the rest. The southern Brahmins do not care to be reminded of the fact; yet they are obliged to admit it, as well as that two of the Rishis were originally Kshatriyas. An objection which people often put to them is that if nothing but the investiture of the triple cord can make Brahmins of them, then their wives, who do not go through the ceremony, really belong to the Sudras; and this means that all Brahmins are obliged to marry out of their caste and by so doing violate their most sacred principles. The reply they invariably make to this, as to other embarrassing questions, is that they are but following time-honoured customs and institutions.

One is certainly justified in expressing doubt on the subject of the Brahmins' origin, but I, for one, should be sorry to oppose my conjectures to their absurd fables. Far be it from me to

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start any theories. My only desire is to collect materials which may help those who are trying to lift the veil which shrouds from view the cradle of the universe. It is practically admitted that India was inhabited very soon after the Deluge, which made a desert of the whole world. The fact that it was so close to the plains of Sennaar, where Noah's descendants remained stationary so long, as well as its good climate and the fertility of the country, soon led to its settlement. I will say nothing of the conquests of Hercules, Bacchus, and Osiris, as most learned men look upon them as fabulous beings, and those who admit an element of truth in the tales carefully denude them of all the extravagant details which tradition assigns to them[1]. The history of Sesostris, although equally full of impossibilities, has something more truthful and authenticated about it. The few ancient monuments which have been preserved make him out to have been the bravest, not to say the only, warrior that peaceful Egypt had to boast of for a period of more than sixteen centuries, and they also lead one to believe that he was the greatest of all conquerors, with an empire extending from the Danube to the Ganges. But his Indian conquests were as temporary and unstable as those of his illustrious rival Alexander the Great much later on in the world's history.

As to the settlements that the Arabs are supposed to have made in India, according to some authors, I think only superficial students will be found ready to believe in them. The fact that they are nomads, who have always lived a wandering life within reach of India, gives some appearance of reality to the theory. Some indeed believe that the caste system was borrowed from them, since it still exists in Arabia; but, as a matter of fact, it is a custom common to all the ancient races of the earth.

I do not trace the origin of the Brahmins either to Egypt or to Arabia, and I believe them to be the descendants not of Shem, as many argue, but of Japheth. According to my theory they reached India from the north, and I should place the first abode of their ancestors in the neighbourhood of the Caucasus.

Two famous mountains situated in Northern India, known

[1] See Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, chap. xxxv.

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as Great Meru (Maha-Meru) and Mount Mandara (Mandara Parvata), are frequently mentioned in their old books and in their prayers, liturgies, and civil and religious ceremonies. These mountains, which I believe to be one and the same under slightly different names, are so far away that their precise whereabouts is unknown to the Brahmins of to-day[1]. And this is not surprising in a country where geographical science is confined to knowledge of the places situated between Benares and Cape Comorin. The Hindus themselves claim to be descended from the inhabitants of these distant northern regions, and they believe that it was there that the seven illustrious ancestors of the Brahmins were born, whose descendants have spread little by little throughout the length and breadth of the land. This opinion of the Hindus as to the origin of the Brahmins is confirmed by the Brahmins themselves, by the manner in which they treat one another. The northern Brahmin considers himself nobler and of higher rank than his southern brother, inasmuch as, having originated closer to the cradle of the race, there is less room for doubt concerning the fact of his direct descent from the Rishis. Surely these seven Hindu Penitents, or philosophers, must be the seven sons of Japheth, who, with their father at their head, led one-third of the human race towards the West, when men began to disperse after the Flood. They did not all reach Europe. Some of them on their way there turned northwards, under the guidance of Magog, second son of Japheth, and penetrated into Tartary as far as the Caucasian Range, in which vast tract of country they made several settlements.

I hazard no conjectures here which are not borne out by the Scriptures or by the commentaries of its wise interpreters, with whose aid I might easily pretend to much erudition; it would only be necessary to copy out *verbatim* what Bochart and the savant Dom Calmet have written on this subject.

Any one believing in the connexion between names and facts will be struck with the similarity existing between Magog's name and Gautama's, commonly called Gotama. *Ma*, or *maha*,

[1] There can be no doubt that these mountains, and others mentioned as lying around them, belong to the great ranges of Central Asia, from which flow the great rivers that water Siberia, China, Tartary, and Hindustan. —Ed.

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signifies great, so that Gotama must mean the Great Gog or Magog[1].

Furthermore, pagan history adds weight to these conjectures of mine on the origin and antiquity of the Brahmins. Learned men allude to more than one Prometheus. According to the Greeks the most celebrated of them all is a son of Japheth. He created man out of the soil, and instilled life into him with the fire stolen from heaven. This bold enterprise irritated Jupiter, who punished him by chaining him to one of the Caucasian Mountains, where a vulture devoured his liver as fast as it renewed itself. Hercules killed the vulture, and thereby put the son of Iapetus, or Japheth, out of his torture.

Why should not Brahma and Prometheus be one and the same person? The Hindu divinity is known also under the names of *Brema* and *Prumé* in some of their tongues. All these names bear resemblance to Promé-theos, or the god *Promé* of the Greeks. Brahma, like Prometheus, is looked upon as the creator of man, who is supposed to have issued from the various parts of Brahma's body. Brahma was also their great lawgiver, being the author of the Vedas, which he wrote with his own hand. He had more than once to appeal to Vishnu for help, just as Prometheus relied on Hercules to deliver him from his enemies.

This pretension on the part of the Hindu Prometheus to be regarded as the maker of man, and therefore a god, has been handed down in some part to his eldest sons, the Brahmins, who humbly call themselves the *Gods Brahma*, or *the Gods of the Earth*. At certain times the people prostrate themselves before them in adoration, and offer up sacrifices to them.

Again, several authors, both sacred and profane, have tried to prove that the Prometheus who wished to pass as the creator of man was no other than Magog himself. It is hardly likely that so near the time of the Deluge the real Creator should have been so completely forgotten that a son of Noah was able to pass himself off as a god; but it is quite possible that his descendants deified him, when the spirit of idolatry began to reign on earth. It was Magog who settled in Tartary with all those who elected to follow him, having decided to separate

[1] Much of this seems extremely fanciful. Max Müller and other modern authorities should be consulted.—ED.

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from Japheth's other children. From thence he or his descendants spread over India and other countries, which had rightly fallen to Shem's lot. This verified Noah's prophecy that Japheth's domination would be far-reaching, and that his posterity would dwell in the tents of Shem (Gen. ix. 27). But admitting that Tartary or the neighbourhood of the Caucasus was the birthplace of the Brahmins, it is not easy to decide the precise date of their arrival in India. It appears certain, however, that they were already established there in a flourishing condition more than nine centuries before the Christian era, as that was about the time of Lycurgus's visit to them; and it is not likely that one of the wisest of the ancient philosophers would have undertaken such a long and tedious journey unless the reputation of the learned men he was going all that way to consult was an old and established fact.

The ancient Hindu works teach us that the Brahmins of those times differed essentially in matters of principle and conduct from their brethren of to-day. The original Brahmin is described as a penitent and a philosopher, living apart from the world and its temptations and entirely engrossed in the pursuit of knowledge, leading a life of introspection and practising a life of purity. At that period of their history the Brahmins were not such an intolerant and exclusive race that penitents belonging to other castes could not be initiated by the *Diksha* ceremony[1], or the investiture of the triple cord. There are many examples of this in their literature. The simple and blameless lives led by the primitive Brahmins, their contempt for wealth and honours, their disinterestedness, and, above all, their extreme sobriety, attracted the attention of the princes and the people. The greatest kings were not above rendering homage to them and treating them with more respect than they would have dared to demand for themselves from their own subjects. These philosophers, living secluded from the world with their wives and children, multiplied exceedingly.

Although the modern Brahmin has degenerated considerably, he still acts up to a great many of the customs and institutions of his ancestors. Like them, he prefers to live in retired places,

[1] *Diksha* means consecration; (undergoing) a religious observance for a particular purpose; solemn preparation.—ED.

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far from the noisy haunts of man; and that is the reason why he settles in isolated villages, from which all natives belonging to other castes are excluded. There are numbers of these villages in the different provinces of the Indian Peninsula, and they are known by the name of *agraras* or *agraharas*[1]. Still more do the Brahmins resemble their ancestors in the way in which they fast frequently and wash themselves daily, and in all that concerns their sacrifices; but, perhaps, most of all in their scrupulous abstinence, not only from meat and all forms of living food, but even from anything with which superstition or prejudice may have connected any idea of pollution.

The religious system of the Brahmins and the absurd theogony which they have propagated in India seem to be the points on which they have gone most astray from the teachings of their predecessors. I cannot believe that the original lawgivers of the Hindus intended to introduce a creed so abominable and palpably absurd as that which at present exists amongst them. Their mythology originally consisted of allegories made intelligible by means of visible and material objects, so that religious knowledge should not die out of the minds of men who appeared to be little influenced by anything that failed to make a direct impression on their senses. But a coarse, ignorant, indolent, and superstitious race soon forgot the spirit of its creed, and ended by believing solely in the forms and emblems which had been employed; so that, before long, they quite lost sight of the spiritual beings of which these emblems were only symbolical. But I shall have occasion to refer to this question again, and so shall merely state here that the long tissue of fables on which the present religion of the Hindus is founded is not, to my mind, very ancient; at least, the greater part of it is not. Although some authors think differently, nothing will persuade me that their mythology is much older than that of the Greeks.

The primitive creed of the ancient Brahmins seems to have been utterly corrupted by their successors. The first form of idolatry into which all nations fall, after forgetting their traditions concerning the unity of God and the absolute and exclusive worship He expects from all His creatures, is the adoration of

[1] *Agrara* is merely a corruption of the word *agrahara*, which literally means 'land-grant to Brahmins.'—ED.

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the stars and conspicuous elements, such as earth, fire, and water. Apparently the first Brahmins practised the purer cult, but afterwards their descendants reached the lowest stage of idolatry by adoring images and statues, which were intended only as the emblems of the objects of their worship. It was when this came to pass that India and the greater part of Asia probably split up into the two beliefs which still exist, one embracing the fables of the Trimurti and the other the religion of Buddha.

The creeds of these two sects probably sprang from the common source of Brahminism, and are only corruptions of it. Some modern authors believe that originally Buddhism reigned supreme throughout India, on either side of the Ganges, and, perhaps, even throughout the whole of Asia from Siberia to Cape Comorin and the Malacca Straits, and from the Caspian Sea to the Gulf of Kamtchatka. In any case, Buddhism appears to have been as ancient as the cult of the Trimurti. In both Tibets, in Tartary, and in China, we know that Buddhism still predominates. According to the historian La Loubère, it was introduced into China from Siam in bygone ages, and not, as is generally supposed, from Cape Comorin. In Burma, Siam, Laos, Cambodia, Cochin China, Japan, Corea, and in most of the kingdoms beyond the Ganges, Buddhism is the recognized religion. The Singalese inhabitants of Ceylon are also Buddhists, and the cult was introduced to them by missionaries and colonists, who a long time ago came over from Burma to settle there. In fact, this religion, with the immortal *Grand Lama*[1] of Tibet as its sovereign pontiff, is still beyond dispute of all existing creeds the one that embraces the greatest number of adherents.

If the last census published by order of the Chinese Government is correct, their vast empire numbers about 300,000,000 inhabitants, and if one estimates the populations of the remaining Asiatic dominions where Buddhism prevails at 150,000,000 only, which is a very moderate calculation, then about one-half of the human race has Buddhism for its religion.

[1] Like a second Phoenix the Grand Lama never dies. When he is about to divest himself of his earthly coil, the Bonzes choose a child of three or four into whose body they cause his soul to migrate, and this child is declared his successor. All faithful Buddhists believe implicitly in this miraculous rebirth.—Dubois.

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Besides these two predominant creeds, there exists a third about which, until recently, little was known. I refer to the religion of the Jains. This sect stands quite aloof, hating equally both Brahminists and Buddhists, as well as their doctrines. They maintain that both the Trimurti and Buddhism are abominable modern inventions, and mere travesties of the true and primitive religion of India, which has remained pure and unimpaired amongst them only. They also hold that they alone are the real descendants of the old Brahmin Penitents, whose doctrines, customs, and usages they protect from universal degradation and from the monstrous innovations of Brahmins and Buddhists alike.

Brahminism underwent a hard struggle before it succeeded in establishing its dominion in India, owing to the opposition offered to it by the Jains; but after a long and bloody war the latter were crushed and had to submit to whatever conditions the Brahmins chose to dictate. The jealousy and animosity which these religious wars stirred up still prevail as strongly as ever, even after a lapse of two or three thousand years. Time, which generally softens the strongest hatreds and brings together the greatest enemies, has, in this case, failed to obliterate the traces of the ancient wrongs of which each sect mutually accuses the other. The daily prayer of a certain sect of Brahmins contains a curse levelled at the heads of the Jains, who retaliate by exclaiming, when they rise to pray, '*Brahma kshayam!*' 'May the Brahmin perish.' If either sect comes into power, it takes the opportunity of humiliating its adversaries and of punishing them without mercy whenever occasion offers.

But whatever may be the respective claims of Buddhists, Brahmins, and Jains with regard to the antiquity of their religions and the differences of doctrine that divide them, it appears highly probable that they all sprang originally from the same source. All three believe in the fundamental doctrine of metempsychosis. The images they worship bear a great likeness to one another, and most of these seem to be merely allegorical emblems invented to help them to remember their original divinities. All their religious establishments are alike composed of priests, monks, and hermits. All their sacrifices, and the ceremonies which accompany them, are nearly identical.

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And, lastly, there is the resemblance of the languages used by the priests in their religious services; that is to say, the Sanskrit of the Brahmins and Jains on this side of the Ganges, and the Pali, which is evidently derived from the Sanskrit, of the Buddhists beyond the Ganges. All these help to prove incontestably the affinity existing between the three religions.

As very little is known about the Jain cult by Europeans, although it is to be found in all parts of the Peninsula, I shall give in an appendix a short account of their doctrines and of the principal controversial points between them and their sworn enemies, the Brahmins. I should like to be able to do the same with regard to the Buddhists, but I have not been able to procure authentic documents about their cult. Residents of Ceylon, where Buddhism predominates, ought to be able to supply the blank thus left in my work.

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CHAPTER VIII

Different Kinds of Brahmins. — Outward Signs by which they are distinguishable.

BRAHMINS are subdivided into seven sects, each of which has for its patron one of the celebrated Penitents already mentioned. Besides this, they are split up into four classes, each class recognizing one of the four Vedas as its own. Thus there are Brahmins of the Yajur-Veda, of the Sama-Veda, of the Rig-Veda, and of the Atharva-Veda. Some are of opinion that this fourth class is extinct; but, as a matter of fact, it still exists, although there are but few representatives left, who are even more exoteric than the other castes, because they allow bloody sacrifices to be offered up, and do not even draw the line at human beings. Added to this, they teach a belief in witchcraft, and any one who is supposed to possess the art earns the odious reputation of being a sorcerer. When the *yagnam* sacrifice takes place, it is customary for Brahmins of all four Vedas to be present. The prayers which are offered up at the *sandhya* [1] are quoted from the four Vedas, each Brahmin repeating those of his own particular Veda, which accounts for the slight differences. Under ordinary circumstances the Brahmins do not appear to be very strict about these minor distinctions, or to prefer one Veda to another. Nor is this altogether surprising, considering that the author of the famous Indian poem *Bhagavata* declares that originally the four Vedas were one and the same. According to him it was the Penitent Vyasa who divided them into four books, and at the same time added introductions and commentaries to render them more intelligible. Indeed, owing to inherent faults, or to the mistakes

[1] Later on I shall explain in what the *yagnam* and *sandhya* consist.— DUBOIS. [*Yagnam* literally means worship (in prayer or praise); sacrificial rite, or sacrifice (to, of, by)].— ED.

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made by ignorant and inattentive copyists, the Vedas are so obscure that even men of learning find it hard to fathom them. I shall have more to say about the Vedas presently. To Vyasa is also attributed the authorship of the eighteen Puranas[1]. These are eighteen poems, all equally futile, containing most minute accounts of Hindu mythology with its gods and heroes. The fables contained in them are responsible for the gross forms of idolatry practised by the Hindus.

Brahmins are also distinguishable by their sect, by their names, by the marks which they trace on their foreheads and other parts of the body, and also by the high priest to whose jurisdiction they are subject. The four principal sects of Brahmins south of the Kistna are: the Vishnavites, the Smarthas, the Tatuvadis, and the Utrassas. The distinctive mark of the Vishnavite Brahmins is the *namam*[2]. Their Simhasana, that is, the place where their high priest resides and their chief school, is at Hobbala in the Northern Carnatic. The Smartha Brahmins trace three horizontal lines on the forehead with sandalwood paste. Their Simhasana is at Singeri in North-west Mysore. Besides these horizontal lines on the brow, the Tatuvadi Brahmins have ineffaceable marks branded on certain parts of their bodies with a red-hot iron. Their Simhasana is at Sravenur. The Utrassa Brahmins draw a perpendicular line from the top of the forehead to the base of the nose.

There are also Brahmins known as Cholias, who are more or less looked down upon by the rest. They appear to be conscious of their own inferiority, for they hold themselves aloof from other Brahmins. All menial work connected with the temples is performed by them, such as washing and decorating the idols, preparing lighted lamps, incense, flowers, fruits, rice, and other similar objects of which sacrifices are composed. In many temples even Sudras are allowed to exercise these functions, and men of this caste are always chosen for the office of sacrificer in pagodas where rams, pigs, cocks, and other living

[1] The names are Brahma-purana, Padma-purana, Vishnu-purana, Siva-purana, Bhagavata, Bavirhotara-purana, Naraddia, Markandeya-purana, Brahmakeyvréta-purana, Linga-purana, Varaha-purana, Skanda-purana, Vamana-purana, Vayu-purana, Kurma-purana, Matsia-purana, Garuda-purana, Brahmanda-purana.—DUBOIS.

[2] See following chapter.

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victims are offered up. No Brahmin would ever consent to take part in a sacrifice where blood has to be shed. It is perhaps on account of the work they condescend to do that the Cholia Brahmins have fallen into such contempt. According to the general view of the Brahmins, to do any work which can be left to the lowest amongst the Sudras is to put themselves on their level, and consequently to degrade themselves. In any case the work of a *pujari* is not thought much of, and by some it is considered absolutely degrading. However, some Brahmins have to accept this task on account of their poverty, but they only do so with extreme reluctance. It is a common proverb amongst them that *for the sake of one's belly one must play many parts*[1].

There are other Brahmins who are derisively called *meat Brahmins* and *fish Brahmins*. For instance, there are the Konkani Brahmins, who come from Konkana, who eat fish and eggs without the slightest compunction, but will not touch meat. And there are many Brahmins from the northern provinces who make no secret of the fact that they eat meat. People tell me, though I can hardly believe it, that such conduct does not lessen the esteem in which they are held in their own country by those of their own caste who abstain from such forbidden food. Anyhow, when these degenerate Brahmins visit Southern India, and their ways become known, all the other Brahmins keep them at a distance and refuse to have any dealings with them. I wonder whether the first Hindu lawgivers forbade the eating of meat and of all other substances containing the germ of life. Do the southern Brahmins observe a rule strictly laid down, and do the northern Brahmins therefore break a law common to the whole caste? It is probable that the northern Brahmins, feeling the want of more substantial food, freed themselves from a custom which was not found irksome by their southern brethren in a hotter climate.

[1] In Sanskrit: *Udara nimittam bahu krita vesham*, which literally means, 'To get food many *rôles* are played.'—ED.

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CHAPTER IX

The different Hindu Sects.—Vishnavites and Sivaites.—The Exterior Marks and Customs peculiar to each.—The *Pavadam*.—The Mutual Hatreds and Differences between the Sects.—Reason for the Dislike which ordinary Brahmins feel for Vishnavite Brahmins and those belonging to other Sects.—Subdivisions of the two Principal Sects.

THE Brahmins recognize six sects, which they designate by the generic name of *Shat Mata* (the Six Sects, or Six Schools); and each of these sects has a numerous following. They are composed entirely of Brahmins, and each has its own particular doctrine of metempsychosis. However, they do not carry these purely scholastic differences to the point of reciprocal hatred or persecution, and the subjects under dispute are pretty much the same as those which provoke polemical discussions amongst scholars and dialecticians in other countries. I shall refer again to this matter elsewhere, and will now speak about the two great sects of the Sudras. It will be seen that they are far from being as calm and tolerant over points of doctrine as the Brahmins. As a general rule, Hindus profess to pay equal honour to the two great divinities of the country, Vishnu and Siva, without showing preference for either, though there are a great many sectarians who devote themselves exclusively to the worship of one or the other.

The one sect is usually called *Vishnu-bhaktas*, which means votaries of Vishnu; the other is called *Siva-bhaktas*, or votaries of Siva. The latter sect is also called *Lingadaris*, and the former *Namadaris*. These names are derived from the distinguishing marks which the sectarians wear [1]. The followers

[1] It is impossible to conceive anything more obscene than the symbolical meaning of these two marks of Hindu worship, namely, the *lingam*

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of Vishnu wear the emblem called *namam*, which they paint on their foreheads. It consists of three lines, one perpendicular and two oblique, meeting at the base, and thus forming a sign which resembles a trident. The centre line is red, the two outer lines are white and are painted on with a sort of clay called *namam*; hence the name given to this emblem. The distinctive sign of the Sivaites is, generally speaking, the *lingam*. They sometimes wear it fastened to the hair or round the arm, enclosed in a little silver tube; but more often they hang it round the neck, and the silver box containing it rests on the chest.

Instead of the *namam*, some devotees of Vishnu paint a single red perpendicular line in the middle of their foreheads in a distinctive manner; and instead of the *lingam* many of the votaries of Siva rub their foreheads and various parts of their bodies with the ashes of cow-dung by way of showing their devotion.

The special devotees of Vishnu are to be found in great numbers in the southern provinces of India, where they are known by various names, such as *Andi*, *Dasari*, *Ramanjogi*, *Bairagi*, and many others[1].

Besides the *namam*, which is an unmistakable sign of this sect, most of the devotees may also be distinguished by the extraordinary costume that they affect. The cloths which they wear are dyed a deep yellow, shading into red; many cover their shoulders with a coloured patchwork blanket, which they partly use as a cloak; their turbans, too, are composed of a motley of many hues. Some wear a tiger's skin on their shoulders instead of the blanket. Most of them have long necklaces of black seeds, the size of nuts. Besides this ridiculous costume, which vies with a jester's motley, the devotees of Vishnu always carry a bronze gong and a large shell called a *sangu* when they are travelling or begging. Both of these are used to make a noise and to announce their approach[2]. With one hand they strike the gong with

and the *namam*; obscene, that is, from the European point of view. From the Hindu point of view they symbolize spiritual and religious truths connected with the divine origin and generation of mankind.—Ed.

[1] The Abbe is wrong in saying that an *Andi* is a devotee of Vishnu; he is always a devotee of Siva. Among *Bairagis*, too, there are devotees both of Vishnu and of Siva.—Ed.

[2] Also devotees of Siva do this.—Ed.

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a little drumstick, producing a bell-like sound; with the other they hold the *sangu* to their mouth, and blow through it shrill and piercing sounds, which are very monotonous. These two objects are always to be seen in the hands of those followers of Vishnu who are beggars by profession, and who in some way resemble the mendicant friars of old. On their breasts they wear a sort of brass plate, on which is engraved a likeness of the monkey *Hanumanta*, or else one of the *Avatars*, or incarnations, of Vishnu. Some of them wear a number of little bells either hanging from their shoulders or on their legs, the tinkling of which warns people of their approach. To all the above paraphernalia some add an iron rod, at each end of which hangs a little brazier of the same metal containing the fire for burning the incense of which their sacrifices are composed.

To ask for alms is looked upon as a right, and even an inherent duty, in this sect. Indeed, as a rule in India any one who assumes the cloak of religion can practise begging as a profession.

It is principally when they are making pilgrimages to some sacred spot that these religious beggars make use of their privileges. Sometimes you meet as many as a thousand in one party. They scatter themselves through the various villages within reach of their route, and each inhabitant takes in a certain number of them, so that all travelling expenses are saved. This is the only occasion on which they travel in such large numbers, though they never wander about quite alone. Their manner when demanding alms is most insolent and audacious, and often threatening. If their demands are not instantly complied with, they will noisily repeat their request, striking their gongs and producing the most deafening sounds from their *sangus* all the time. If such methods are not successful, they have been known to force their way into a house, break all the household utensils, and damage everything they can find. These religious mendicants generally pursue their begging to an accompaniment of singing and dancing. Their songs are a species of hymns in honour of their deities; and they very often sing indecent ballads. The more freely the latter are interlarded with obscenities, the better are they calculated to attract offerings from the public.

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The intemperance to which these religious beggars, and indeed all the devotees of Vishnu, are addicted, causes the better class of Hindus to regard them with great disfavour. In fact, such mendicants seem rather to pride themselves on their want of moderation in eating and drinking, from a feeling of opposition to the Lingayats, and in order to make the difference between themselves and their adversaries more apparent. The sobriety of the latter equals, if it does not surpass, that of the Brahmins. Vishnavites eat all kinds of meat ostentatiously, and drink arrack, toddy, or any other intoxicating liquors or drugs that they can procure, without scruple or shame. Excesses of all kinds are laid to their charge, and it is amongst them that that most abominable rite called *sakti-puja*[1] is practised, of which I shall speak at greater length further on.

The chief objects of veneration amongst the votaries of Vishnu are the monkey, the bird of prey called *garuda*, and the cobra. Should any one be so imprudent as to kill, or even injure, any one of these creatures in their presence, he might find the consequences very unpleasant, and he would only be able to expiate this supposed crime by offering the sacrifice called *pavadam*, which is only performed on very grave occasions, such as those just mentioned, or when it is a question of obtaining reparation for an injury done to some member of the sect, but felt to reflect on all the others. This expiatory sacrifice is a very serious affair; for it consists in immolating a human victim, and then resuscitating him!

When it is reported that any person has committed such an offence as renders the *pavadam* necessary, all the *Vishnu bhaktas* flock in crowds to the sulprit's house, round which as many as 2,000 and more have been known to assemble, each of them provided with his gong and his *sangu*. They begin by arresting the person who is the cause of the assemblage; and then they erect at a short distance from the house a small tent, which is quickly surrounded by many rows of Vishnavites. The chiefs select some member of the sect who is willing to be sacrificed, and he is exhibited to the crowd who have come to witness the

[1] *Sakti-puja* is the worship of *Sakti*, which is the active power or female energy of a deity (especially of Siva). This *puja* is observed largely among the Sivaites, and to some extent among the Vishnavites.—ED.

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spectacle. They make a slight incision in his arm from which blood flows, and the victim then appears to grow weaker and weaker, until he falls fainting to the ground, where he remains motionless. The victim, who of course is only feigning death, is then carried to the tent which has been erected for the purpose, and around which the *Vishnu-bhaktas* group themselves, taking great care that no one shall approach who does not belong to their sect. Others watch the house of him who has been the cause of the ceremony. All this time the whole multitude are shouting and screaming at the top of their voices, which, added to the banging of the gongs and the harsh and lugubrious notes of the *sangus*, produces a din and confusion of sounds as indescribable as they are unbearable. This fearful hubbub continues until the offending party has paid the fine imposed on him, which is generally far beyond his means. However, the inhabitants of the village and neighbourhood, exasperated beyond all measure, usually try and make some agreement with the leader of the fanatics, and, paying them part of the stipulated sum, entreat them to bring the ceremony of the *pavadam* to a speedy termination, and to return to their homes. When their demands have been satisfied the headmen retire to the tent, and restore the dead man to life. To bring about this miracle an incision is made in the thigh of somebody amongst them. The blood which flows from it is collected in a vessel, and then sprinkled over the body of the victim. By virtue of this simple ceremony the pretended dead man comes back to life, in the best possible health. He is then again shown to the spectators, who appear thoroughly convinced of the reality of this marvellous resurrection[1].

In order to consummate the expiation of the crime or offence which has given rise to the ceremony, they give a great feast with the money derived from the fine, and every one departs as soon as it is over.

I once saw the *pavadam* celebrated with much solemnity in a village near my house. The offence which provoked it arose from an inhabitant of the village having unintentionally felled

[1] The *pavadam* is probably called after Pavadammai, a minor deity of ferocious temper. The ceremony is not observed nowadays in any part of the country.—ED.

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a tree called *kaka-mara* [1], which bears yellow flowers, and to which the followers of Vishnu offer sacrifices and worship.

The sect of Siva is just as numerous as that of Vishnu. It predominates altogether in several provinces. In the western parts of the Peninsula, along the whole length of the long chain of mountains which separates what are known in Europe as Malabar and Coromandel, the Lingayats, or followers of Siva, form at least half of the population for a distance extending for more than 100 miles from north to south.

Like the Brahmins they abstain from all animal food and from everything that has had even a germ of life, such as eggs, &c., some vegetable products being included under this head. Instead of burning their dead, as do most Hindus, they bury them. They do not recognize the laws relating to defilement which are generally accepted by other castes, such, for instance, as those occasioned by a woman's periodical ailments, and by the death and funeral of relations. They have also other rules and regulations which differ from those generally in force. Their indifference to all such prescriptive customs relating to defilement and cleanliness has given rise to a Hindu proverb which says: 'There is no river for a Lingayat'; meaning that the members of this sect do not recognize, at all events on many occasions, the virtues and merits of ablutions.

The point in the creed of the Sivaites which appears to me to be most remarkable is their entire rejection of that fundamental principle of the Hindu religion, *marujanma*, or metempsychosis. In consequence of their peculiar views on this point they have no *titis*, or anniversary festivals, to commemorate the dead and to afford them the benefit of the prayers, sacrifices, and intercessions of the living, of which festivals I shall speak more fully later on. A Lingayat is no sooner buried than he is forgotten.

Amongst the Sivaites there also exists a sect known by the name of *Vira-seiva*, which refuses to recognize any caste distinctions, maintaining that the *lingam* makes all men equal. If even a Pariah joins the sect he is considered in no way inferior to a Brahmin. Wherever the *lingam* is found, there, they say, is the throne of the deity, without distinction of class or rank.

[1] *Cassia fistula.*—ED.

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The Pariah's humble hut containing this sacred emblem is far above the most magnificent palace where it is not.

The direct opposition of their religious tenets and rules of life to those of all other Hindus, and especially to those of Brahmins, renders the Lingayats peculiarly obnoxious in the eyes of the latter, who cannot endure the sight of the *Jangamas* and other headmen of the sect. Amongst the Lingayats as amongst the Namadaris, are an immense number of religious beggars, called *Pandarams*, *Voderus*, *Jangamas*, &c. Many of these penitent Sivaites have no other means of subsistence except begging. They ply their trade systematically and in gangs. Some, however, live in retreat in the *mutts* or temples, which usually possess lands, the rents of which, added to the offerings of the faithful, are sufficient to maintain them.

The *gurus*, or priests of Siva, who are known in the western provinces by the name of *Jangamas*, are for the most part celibates. They have a custom which is peculiar to themselves, and curious enough to be worth remarking. When a *guru* travels about his district he lodges with some member of the sect, and the members contend amongst themselves for the honour of receiving him. When he has selected the house he wishes to stay in, the master and all the other male inmates are obliged, out of respect for him, to leave it, and go and stay elsewhere. The holy man remains there day and night with only the women of the house, whom he keeps to wait on him and cook for him, without creating any scandal or exciting the jealousy of the husbands. All the same, some scandal-mongers have remarked that the *Jangamas* always take care to choose a house where the women are young.

The costume worn by the devotees of Siva is very much the same as that of the Vishnavites. Both are equally peculiar in their attire. They always wear clothes of *kavi* colour, that is to say, dark yellow verging on red. This colour is obligatory, not only on the devotees of both Vishnu and Siva, but also on every one who is under a vow of penance. It is the colour affected by all *gurus* and Hindu priests of all denominations, by *fakirs*, also by all the priests and religious followers of Buddha who live on the other side of the Ganges.

Besides the *lingam*, there are several other outward signs by which the devotees of Siva may be recognized, such as the long

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necklaces of seeds called *rudrakshas*, which resemble a nutmeg in size, colour, and nearly in shape; also the cow-dung ashes with which they besmear their forehead, arms, and various other portions of the body. The two chief objects of their devotion are the *lingam* and the bull.

Though children usually follow the religion of their fathers, they do not become Vishnavites or Lingayats merely by right of birth. They are only admitted to the sect that their parents belong to when they have reached a certain age, and after being initiated by the *guru*. This ceremony of initiation is called *diksha*[1]. It consists in repeating certain appropriate *mantrams*, or prayers, over the neophyte, and whispering some secret instructions in his ear. But these are all spoken in a language which is seldom understood even by the person who presides at the ceremony.

By the *diksha* the new member acquires a perpetual right to all the privileges of the sect into which he has been admitted. Persons of all castes can become Vishnavites, and after their admission can wear the *namam* or distinctive mark on their foreheads. Neither Pariahs nor even *Chucklers* are excluded; and it has been noticed that the lower castes are particularly numerous in this sect.

I do not think there would be any greater difficulty in becoming a member of the Siva sect, but as on initiation the members undertake to entirely give up eating meat and drinking any intoxicating liquor, the lower castes, who do both unhesitatingly, find the conditions too hard. Consequently, only high-class Sudras and scarcely any Pariahs belong to this sect. It is no uncommon thing for people to change from one sect to the other, according as it suits their interest, or even out of spite or caprice. Either sect will take a convert from the other without asking any questions or making any difficulty. Sometimes one comes across missionaries scouring the country with written professions of faith in their hands, and using various means for gaining proselytes to their respective sects. In some parts a remarkable peculiarity is to be observed in reference to these two sects. Sometimes the husband is a Vishnavite and bears the *namam* on his forehead, while the wife is a follower of

[1] This word means 'initiation.' Native Christians often call Baptism *gniana diksha*, which means 'spiritual initiation.'—DUBOIS.

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Siva and wears the *lingam*. The former eats meat, but the latter may not touch it. This divergence of religious opinion, however, in no way destroys the peace of the household. Each observes the practices of his or her own particular creed, and worships his or her god in the way that seems best, without any interference from the other. At the same time, each sect tries its best to magnify its own particular deity and to belittle that of its rivals. The devotees of Vishnu declare that the preservation of the universe is entirely due to him, and that to him Siva owes both his birth and existence, since Vishnu saved him several times under such circumstances that without his aid Siva must infallibly have perished. Therefore Vishnu is immeasurably above Siva in every respect, and to him alone should homage be offered.

The devotees of Siva, on their side, maintain obstinately that Vishnu is of no account, and has never committed any but the basest actions, which only disgrace him and make him hateful in the eyes of men. As proofs of their assertions they point to several facts in the life of this deity, which their adversaries cannot deny, and which certainly do not redound to his credit. Siva, according to them, is sovereign lord of all, and therefore the proper object of all worship.

According to the Vishnavites it is the height of all abomination to wear the *lingam*. According to their antagonists, whoever is decorated with the *namam* will be tormented in hell by a sort of fork similar in form to this emblem. These mutual recriminations often end in violent altercations and riots. The numerous bands of religious mendicants of both sects are specially apt to provoke strife. One may sometimes see these fanatics collected together in crowds to support their opinion of the superexcellence of their respective doctrines. They will overwhelm each other with torrents of abuse and obscene insults, and pour forth blasphemies and imprecations, on one side against Siva, on the other against Vishnu; and finally they will come to blows. Fortunately blood is seldom shed on these battle-fields. They content themselves with dealing each other buffets with their fists, knocking off each other's turbans, and much tearing of garments. Having thus given vent to their feelings, the combatants separate by mutual consent.

That these religious dissensions do not set the whole country

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ablaze, or occasion those crimes of all kinds which were for centuries the result of religious fanaticism in Europe and elsewhere, is due no doubt to the naturally mild and timid character of the Hindus, and especially to the fact that the greater number compound with their consciences and pay equal honour to Vishnu and Siva. Being thus free from any bias towards either party, the latter serve as arbitrators in these religious combats, and often check incipient quarrels.

There is no doubt, however, that these controversies were wont to excite general ferment in several provinces at no very remote date. The agitation, excited in the first instance by fanatical devotees, was further fomented by the Rajahs and other princes, who became Vishnavites or Sivaites according as it suited their political interests.

Those who are acquainted with the character and disposition of the *Bairagis* and *Goshais* of the north, and of the *Dasari, Andis, Jangamas,* and *Pandarams* in the south, are fully persuaded that it would still be quite easy for two ambitious and hostile princes to arm these fanatics and persuade them to come to blows if they raised the standard of *Basava* (the bull) on one side, and of *Hanumanta* (the monkey) on the other.

In these religious squabbles, which still take place occasionally, the Vishnavites appear to be the more fanatical and fervent, and they are almost always the aggressors. The reason is, that this sect draws most of its members from the very dregs of society, and so takes a delight in creating troubles or disturbances. The followers of Siva, on the other hand, who belong to the upper classes of the Sudras, are much more peaceable and tolerant.

The majority of the Hindus, and particularly the Brahmins, take no part whatever in these religious squabbles. The latter act on the principle of paying equal honour to the two chief deities of the country, and though, as a rule, they appear to have a preference for Vishnu, they never let a day pass without offering in their own houses a sacrifice to the *lingam,* which is Siva's emblem.

It is very difficult to determine the origin of these two sects. Some authors have thought that they are quite a modern institution. Yet they are alluded to in several of the most ancient Puranas. One of the *Avatars,* or incarnations, of Vishnu, called

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Narasimha. that is to say, *half-man half-lion*, is the form under which this deity disguised himself when he came to deliver the earth from the giant Hiranniakashiapa, who was ravaging it. We learn in the *Bhâgavata* that this cruel monster had a good son called Prahlada, who belonged to the Vishnavite sect, and who made the greatest efforts to induce his father to embrace his special form of religion, but without success. However, the ill-feeling between the two sects seems not to have been so marked at the beginning.

Brahmins in general look upon the Vishnavite Brahmins (see Chapter VIII), who profess a special devotion for Vishnu if they do not worship him exclusively, as detestable schismatics. The preference that the latter show for a sect composed almost entirely of Sudras and the lowest of the people, and their practice of appearing in public with their foreheads decorated with the *namam*, just like common Pariahs or *Chucklers*, are all offences which degrade them in the eyes of their noble *confrères*.

No doubt the same contempt would be felt for Brahmins who wore the *lingam*, but I have never seen one thus decorated, and I doubt whether one could be found anywhere in the south, from the banks of the Kistna to Cape Comorin. I have been told, however, that there are some districts in the north where persons of this caste are to be found who devote themselves exclusively to the worship of Siva, and who always wear the emblem of this deity.

The sect of Vishnavite Brahmins appears to have originated in Dravida or Aravam (the Tamil country). From there they spread over the provinces up to the Kistna, where they have retained, to the present day, their own peculiar customs and language, as well as their own cult. The Brahmins who inhabit the country north of this river have never permitted these stubborn schismatics to settle amongst them.

The feeling of aversion which orthodox Brahmins entertain for the Vishnavite Brahmins is shared by Hindus of all castes. A stigma of reproach appears to cling to them. It cannot be the case, however, that the disfavour with which they are regarded is entirely due to their exclusive worship of Vishnu. I think it must be largely imputed to their excessive pride and arrogance, their extreme severity, and their supercilious

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manners; for though all Brahmins share these characteristics, it is generally acknowledged that the Vishnavites display them in an intensified form.

Be the reason what it may, there is no denying that the Vishnavites form a class by themselves in society. The antipathy which these two orders of Brahmins feel for each other is noticeable on all occasions. The members of one sect never invite members of the other to eat with them, or to participate in their civil or religious feasts; and when one of them is raised to a position of authority, it is on persons of his own sect that his patronage is bestowed.

The two sects of Vishnavites and Sivaites are each subdivided into several others, which are known under the general term of *Mattas* or *Mattancharas*. Amongst the Vishnavites, for instance, there are the *Vaishnavas*, the *Tatuvadis*, the *Ramojus*, the *Satanis*, &c., sub-sects which again are divided into a great many others. For instance, amongst the *Vaishnavas* there are the *Vaishnava-triamalas*, the *Kandalas*, the *Nallaris*, &c.

The *Jogis*, the *Jangamas*, the *Voderus*, the *Viraktas*, the *Bolu-Jangamas*, the *Vira-seivas*, &c., belong to the Sivaites.

Each of these sub-sects has its own peculiar tenets, mysteries, *mantrams*, sacrifices; in fact, some points of variation in rites as in doctrines. The heads of these sub-sects dislike and avoid each other. They often quarrel over the various points of doctrine which cause such divisions. But these are forgotten, or, at any rate, allowed to remain in abeyance, should it be necessary to make common cause in defending the interests of the sect as a whole, during the disputes which occasionally arise between the Vishnavites and Sivaites.

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CHAPTER X

The *Gurus*, or Hindu Priests.—The Portrait of a true *Guru*.—Their Temporal and Spiritual Power.—The Fear and Respect that they inspire.—Ecclesiastical Hierarchy composed of the Superior and Inferior Priests.—The Honours paid to them.—Priestesses.

I SHALL begin this chapter by giving an accurate description of a true *guru* belonging to the sect of Siva. This picture is taken from the *Vedanta Sara*, to which it serves as an introduction. At the same time I must warn my readers that it would be difficult to find any points of resemblance between this picture and the *gurus* of the present day, who are very far from attaining to this pitch of perfection. The sketch will, however, prove that even the very highest moral virtues were not unknown to the Hindus, though now they regard them only as subjects for speculative discussion.

'A true *guru* is a man who is in the habit of practising all the virtues; who with the sword of wisdom has lopped off all the branches and torn out all the roots of sin, and who has dispersed, with the light of reason, the thick shadows in which sin is shrouded; who, though seated on a mountain of sins, yet confronts their attacks with a heart as hard as a diamond; who behaves with dignity and independence; who has the feelings of a father for all his disciples; who makes no difference in his conduct between his friends and his enemies, but shows equal kindness to both; who looks on gold and precious stones with the same indifference as on pieces of iron or potsherd, and values the one as highly as the other; whose chief care is to enlighten the ignorance in which the rest of mankind is plunged. He is a man who performs all the acts of worship of which Siva is the object, omitting none; who knows no other god than Siva, and reads no other history than his; who shines like the sun in the midst of the dark clouds of ignorance which

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surround him; who meditates unceasingly on the merits of the *lingam*, and proclaims everywhere the praises of Siva; who rejects, even in thought, every sinful action, and puts in practice all the virtues that he preaches; who, knowing all the paths which lead to sin, knows also the means of avoiding them; who observes with scrupulous exactitude all the rules of propriety which do honour to Siva. He should be deeply learned, and know the *Vedanta* perfectly. He is a man who has made pilgrimages to all the sacred places, and has seen with his own eyes Benares, Kedaram, Conjeeveram, Rámésvaram, Srírangam, Sringeri, Gokarnam, Kálahasti, and other spots which are consecrated to Siva. He must have performed his ablutions in all the sacred rivers, such as the Ganges, the Jumna, the Sarasvati, the Indus, the Godávari, the Kistna, the Nerbudda, the Cauvery, &c., and have drunk of each of these sanctifying waters. He must have bathed in all the sacred springs and tanks, such as the Surya-pushkarani, the Chandra-pushkarani, the Indra-pushkarani, and others, wherever they may be situated. He must have visited all the sacred deserts and woods, such as Neimisha-aranya, Badari-aranya, Dandaka-aranya, Goch-aranya, &c., and have left his footprints in them. He must be acquainted with all the observances for penance or *asramas*, such as are enjoined by the most famous devotees, and which are known by the names of Narayana-asrama, Vamana-asrama, Gautama-asrama, Vasishta-asrama. He must be one who has practised these religious exercises, and who has derived benefit from them. He must be perfectly acquainted with the four Vedas, the *Tarka-sastram* (or logic), the *Bhootu-sastram*, the *Mimamsa-sastram*, &c. He must be well versed in the knowledge of the *Vedanga*, of the *Jyotisha-sastram* (astrology), of *Vaidya-sastram* (medicine), of *Dharma-sastram*, of *Kaviana-takam* (poetry), &c., and he must know by heart the eighteen Puranas and the sixty-four Kalais[1]. This is the character of a true *guru*; these are the qualities which he ought to possess, that he may be in a position to show others the path of virtue, and help them out of the slough of vice.'

This is what the Hindu *gurus* ought to be, but are not. What follows is a description of them as they really are.

The word *guru*, properly speaking, means 'master' or

[1] These include all kinds of worldly wisdom.—Dubois.

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'guide,' and this is why parents are sometimes called the *maha-gurus* or grand masters of their families, and kings are called the *gurus* of their kingdoms, and masters the *gurus* of their servants.

The word is also used to designate persons of distinguished rank who are raised to a high position and invested with a character for sanctity, which confers both spiritual and temporal power upon them. The latter, which is exercised over the whole caste, consists in regulating its affairs, in keeping a strict watch to see that all its customs, both those for use in private as well as in public, are accurately observed, in punishing those who disregard them and expelling from caste those who have deserved this indignity, in reinstating the penitent, and several other no less important prerogatives. Besides this temporal authority, which no one disputes, they also exercise very extensive spiritual power. The *sashtanga* or prostration of the six members[1] when made before them and followed by their *asirvadam*, or blessing, will obtain the remission of all sins. The very sight even of *gurus* will produce the same effect. Any *prasadam* or gift from them, though usually some perfectly valueless object, such as a pinch of the ashes of cow-dung with which they besmear their foreheads, the fruits or flowers that have been offered to idols, the remains of their food, the water with which they have rinsed out their mouths or washed their face or feet, and which is highly prized and very often drunk by those who receive it; in short, any gift whatever from their sacred hands has the merit of cleansing both soul and body from all impurities.

On the other hand, while the beneficial effects of their blessings or their trivial presents excite so large an amount of respect and admiration from the dull-witted public, their maledictions, which are no less powerful, are as greatly feared. The Hindus are convinced that their curses never fail to produce effect, whether justly or unjustly incurred. Their books are full of fables which seem to have been invented expressly to exemplify and strengthen this idea. The attendants of the *guru*, who are interested in making the part which their master plays appear credible, are always recounting ridiculous stories

[1] It has already been pointed out in a note to a former chapter that *sashtanga* does not mean the prostration of six members but of eight members.—ED.

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on this subject, of which they declare they have been eye-witnesses; and in order that the imposture may be the less easily discovered, they always place the scene in some distant country. Sometimes they relate that the person against whom the curse was fulminated died suddenly whilst the *guru* was still speaking; that another was seized with palsy in all his limbs, and that the affliction will remain until the anathema has been removed; or that the *guru's* malediction caused some woman to be prematurely confined; or that a labourer saw all his cattle die suddenly at the moment when the malediction was hurled at his head; or that one man was turned to stone and another became a pig; in fact, they will relate a thousand similar absurdities quite seriously[1].

If the foolish credulity of the Hindu will carry him to these lengths, can any one be surprised if his feelings of respect and fear for his *guru* are equally extravagant? He will take the greatest care to do nothing that might displease him. Hindus have been reduced to such terrible straits as to sell their wives or their children in order to procure the money to pay the imposts or procure the presents that their *gurus* remorselessly claimed from them, rather than run the risk of exposing themselves to their much-dreaded maledictions[2].

Each caste and each sect has its own particular *gurus*: but the latter are not all invested with equal authority; a sort of hierarchy exists amongst them. Besides the vast numbers of subordinate priests who are to be met with everywhere, each sect has a limited number of high priests who exercise authority over the inferior *gurus*, deputing to them their powers of spiritual jurisdiction. These high priests have also the right of degrading their inferiors from their position and of putting others in their

[1] The ideas of the Hindus on the subject of the blessings and curses of their *gurus* are analogous, at any rate in point of extravagance, to those which, according to Holy Scripture, were current in the time of the ancient Patriarchs. Noah's curse on his son Ham and his blessing on the other two, Shem and Japheth, bore fruit (Genesis ix). The value that Esau and Jacob set on their father Isaac's blessing is well known (Genesis xxvii); also the bitter regret of Esau when he found that he had been supplanted by Jacob.—DUBOIS.

[2] Times are changed since the days of the Abbe, and the *gurus* in most cases are the mere hangers-on of rich disciples. They may be able to exercise some influence over the illiterate and poor, but with the majority of the educated and well-to do their influence is not very great.—ED.

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places. The residences of Hindu high priests are generally known by the name of *simhasana*[1]. These *simhasanas* are to be found in various provinces of India. Each caste and each sect acknowledges one that specially belongs to it. For instance, the Brahmins who belong to the *Smartha* sect have a different *guru* from the *Tatuvadi* sect, and these again recognize a different one from the Vishnavite Brahmins.

The different branches of the sects of Vishnu and Siva have also their own particular *gurus* and high priests. The *Sri-Vaishnavas*, for instance, acknowledge four *simhasanas* and seventy-two *pitahs* or supplementary establishments, where the inferior *gurus* reside, besides a multitude of subordinate ministers who are also called *gurus*.

The high priests, as well as the inferior priests belonging to the sect of Siva, are drawn entirely from the Sudra caste; but the greater number of the head *gurus* belonging to the Vishnavites are Vishnavite Brahmins, and they appoint the inferior clergy of that sect. The most famous *simhasana* of the Vishnavites is in the sacred town of Tirupati in the Carnatic. There a kind of arch-pontiff resides, whose jurisdiction extends over almost the whole of the Peninsula.

Brahmins are also, as a rule, the *gurus* of the various sects of Hindus who are more tolerant than those just mentioned, that is to say, those who worship both Vishnu and Siva.

The high priest or the *guru* belonging to one sect has no authority over any other. Neither his *prasadam*[2], nor his curse, nor his blessing would carry any weight with them; and it is very rarely that you hear of priests overstepping the limits of their own jurisdiction.

People of very high rank, such as kings or princes, have a *guru* exclusively attached to their households who accompanies them everywhere. They prostrate themselves daily at the *guru's* feet and receive from him the *prasadam* or gift, and

[1] This word may be translated 'throne.' It is derived from the two words *simha*, which means *lion*, and *asana*, which means a *seat*, because a high priest's throne ought to be covered with a lion's skin. Custom, however, has changed this for that of a tiger.—DUBOIS.

Simhasana is more correctly derived from the figure of a lion on the back of the seat.—ED.

[2] *Prasada* means literally serenity, cheerfulness, kindness, favour, &c., and it has come to mean 'food or anything offered to an idol.'—ED.

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the *asirvadam*, or blessing. When they travel the *guru* is always is close attendance; but if they are going to take part in a war or any other dangerous expedition, the holy man takes care to remain prudently behind. He usually contents himself under these circumstances with bestowing his blessing and giving some small present or amulet, which he has consecrated, and which, if carefully preserved, possesses the infallible virtue of averting all misfortunes to which they might be exposed when far from their spiritual guide.

Princes, from motives of ostentation, affect to keep their *gurus* in great splendour, with the result that the latter's extravagant pomp often exceeds their own. Besides giving them many very valuable presents, they also endow them with land yielding large revenues. Hindu high priests never appear in public except in magnificent state. They like best to show off all their splendour when they are making a tour in their districts. They either ride on a richly caparisoned elephant or in a superb palanquin. Many have an escort of cavalry, and are surrounded by guards both mounted and on foot, armed with pikes and other weapons. Bands of musicians playing all sorts of instruments precede them, and numberless flags of all colours, on which are painted pictures of their gods, flutter in the midst of the cavalcade. The procession is headed by heralds, some of whom sing verses in the high priest's honour, while the rest go on ahead and warn the passers-by to clear the way and to pay the homage and respect that are his due[1]. All along the route incense and other perfumes are burnt in the high priest's honour; new cloths are perpetually spread for him to pass over; triumphal arches called *toranams*, made of branches of trees, are erected at short intervals; bevies of professional prostitutes and dancing-girls

[1] The custom amongst persons of high rank, such as *gurus*, kings, princes, and governors of provinces, of being preceded on their march by heralds, singing their praises, is very general in India. These heralds give a long account of their master's noble origin, of his exalted rank, of his boundless power, his virtues, and his many excellent qualities; and they admonish the public to pay the respect and homage which are due to so great a personage. This custom, though of Hindu origin, has been adopted by the Mahomedans. It appears, as may be seen from the writings of both sacred and secular authors, that the practice of being preceded by heralds dates from very ancient times—see Genesis xli. 43; Esther vi. 8; and there are several other passages in the Bible where such heralds are spoken of.—DUBOIS.

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form part of the procession, and relieve each other at intervals, so that the obscene songs and lascivious dances may continue uninterruptedly[1]. This magnificent spectacle attracts great crowds of people, who prostrate themselves before the *guru*, and, after having offered him their respectful homage, join the rest of the crowd and make the air ring with their joyful shouts.

The *gurus* of inferior rank make a show in proportion to their means. Those who belong to the sect of Vishnu known by the name of *Vaishnavas* generally travel on some sorry steed. Some are even reduced to walking on foot. The *Pandarams* and *Jangamas*, priests of Siva, go on horseback or in a palanquin, but their favourite mode of progression is riding on an ox.

Gurus, as a rule, rank first in society. They often receive tokens of respect, or rather of adoration, that are not offered to the gods themselves. And this is not surprising when one remembers that every Hindu is fully persuaded that, under certain circumstances, the *gurus* have authority even over the celestial powers.

From time to time *gurus* make tours of inspection in those districts where their followers are most numerous. They sometimes go as much as a hundred miles from their habitual residence. The chief, if not the only, object of the expedition is to collect money. Besides the fines which they impose upon those who have committed some crime, or been guilty of breaking some rule of their caste or sect, they are merciless in extorting tribute money from their followers, which often greatly exceeds their means. They call this method of obtaining money *dakshina*[2] and *pada-kanikai*[3], and no one, however poor he may be, is exempt from paying it. There is no insult or indignity that *gurus* will not inflict upon any one who either cannot or will not submit to this tax. Deaf to all entreaties, they cause the defaulter to appear before them in an ignominious and

[1] This picture is greatly exaggerated. Nowhere do 'professional prostitutes and dancing-girls' form part of processions in honour of *gurus*. On the contrary, prostitutes are not allowed to approach these holy men. —ED.

[2] *Dakshina* literally means the sacrificial fee. It has now come to mean gift. The gift to the priest is enforced more or less among the Madhvas; but among the Sivaites and Vishnavites the priests are more lenient.—ED.

[3] This word means literally 'offering at the feet.' See Chapter III.—DUBOIS.

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humiliating attitude, publicly overwhelm him with insults and reproaches, and order that mud or cow-dung shall be thrown in his face. If these means do not succeed, they force him to give up one of his children, who is obliged to work without wages until the tribute money is paid. Indeed, they have been known to take away a man's wife as compensation. Finally, as a last and infallible resource, they threaten him with their malediction; and such is the Hindu's credulity, and so great his dread of the evils which he foresees will fall upon him if the curse be spoken, that, if it is not absolutely impossible, he submits and pays the required sum[1].

The *gurus* also increase their revenue by means of taxes, called *guru-dakshina*, which are levied on the occasion of a birth, at the ceremony of the *diksha* (initiation), at a marriage, or at a death.

If these pastoral visits were of very frequent occurrence it is evident that the resources of the poor flock would soon be exhausted. Fortunately, those of the chief *gurus*, which are the most expensive, take place but seldom. Some make a tour of their districts once in five years, others once in ten only, and others, again, only once in a lifetime.

Some *gurus* are married, but most are celibates. The latter, however, do not appear to adhere very strictly to their vow of chastity. Their conduct on this head is the more open to misconstruction in that they can have one or two women in their houses as cooks. According to the customs and ideas of the country, for a man to keep a female servant and to have her as his mistress are one and the same thing. No Hindu can be persuaded of the possibility of free, and at the same time innocent, intercourse between a man and a woman.

But in spite of this, the common herd, who fancy that *gurus* are not made of the same clay as other mortals and are consequently impeccable, are in no wise shocked at these illicit connexions. Sensible people take no notice, but shut their eyes and say that allowances must be made for human weakness.

The Brahmins pretend that they are the *gurus* for all castes, and that they alone have a right to the rank and honours

[1] Nowadays *gurus* exercise less extensive powers over their disciples. —ED.

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appertaining to that profession; but, as I have already mentioned, a number of common Sudras also contrive to raise themselves to that dignified position. The Brahmins, of course, look upon them as intruders, but this does not in the least prevent their enjoying all the honours and advantages which belong to their rank in the caste and sect by which they are acknowledged.

Except when they are making their tours of inspection, most *gurus* live in seclusion, shut up in isolated hermitages called *mutts*. They are rarely seen in public. Some of them live in the vicinity of the large pagodas. But the high priests, whose large households and daily hospitalities entail considerable expenditure, generally live in the large *agraharas* or towns inhabited principally by Brahmins, and for this reason called *punyasthalas*, or abodes of virtue. There they give audience to the numerous members of their flocks who come to perform worship, to receive their *asirvadam* (benediction) and their *prasadam* (gift), to offer presents, to bring complaints about the infraction of rules and customs, &c. Hindus, on presenting themselves before their *guru*, first perform the *sashtanga*, and then touch the ground with each side of the forehead. The holy man replies to this mark of respect by gravely pronouncing the word *'Asirvadam!'* On hearing this, his worshippers rise and receive the *prasadam* from him, which he gives, whispering the following words, if they belong to the Siva sect, in their ear: 'It is I who am thy *guru*, and whom thou art bound to worship.'

The followers of Siva, having thus done homage to their *Jangamas* and *Pandarams*, proceed to perform a very disgusting ceremony. They solemnly pour water over the feet of their *guru* and wash them, reciting *mantrams* the while; then carefully collecting the water so used in a copper vessel, they pour part of it over their head and face, and drink the rest.

The Vishnavites go through a similar ceremony with their *gurus*; and this is by no means the most revolting of the marks of respect which these idiotic fanatics delight in paying. A piece of food that a *guru* has already masticated, or the water with which he has rinsed out his mouth, at once becomes sacred in their eyes, and is swallowed with avidity.

About ten miles from the fort of Chinnerayapatam a hermitage

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is to be found, known by the name of Kudlu-gondur, where a Vishnavite *guru* has taken up his abode. This solitary *mutt*, though but a poor place to look at, is visited by a great number of devotees, who go there to offer their homage to the penitent, to receive his *asirvadam* and *prasadam*, and through them the remission of their sins. I have been informed by some of these pilgrims themselves, that the more enthusiastic amongst them watch for the moment when the old *guru* is about to expectorate, when they stretch out their hands, struggling as to who shall have the happiness and good luck to catch the superfluous fluid which the holy man ejects; the rest of the scene is indescribable.

Gurus sometimes authorize agents to collect the tributes and offerings of the faithful, and also give them power to impose fines on evil-doers.

After having discharged the duties to their followers which their position imposes, and performed their daily ablutions and sacrifices, both morning and evening, the *gurus* employ the rest of their time—or they ought to do so if they adhered to their rules—in the study and contemplation of their sacred books. In the case of married *gurus* the office descends from father to son. Successors to the unmarried *gurus* are nominated by their superiors, who generally choose one of their own creatures. A high priest is usually assisted by a coadjutor during his lifetime, who succeeds his chief as a matter of course.

To the sects both of Siva and Vishnu priestesses are attached, that is to say, women specially set apart, under the name of *wives of the gods*, for the service of one or other of these deities. They are quite a distinct class from the dancing-girls of the temples, but are equally depraved. They are generally the unfortunate victims of the immorality of the *Jangamas* or *Vaishnavas*. These priests, by way of keeping up a character for good behaviour, and conciliating the families upon whom they have brought dishonour, put the whole blame on Vishnu or Siva; and the poor gods, as is only fair, are forced to make amends. So the girls are given to the gods as wives, by the aid of a few ceremonies; and we know that these worthy *gurus* enjoy the privilege of representing in everything the gods whose ministers they are. The women who are thus

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consecrated to Vishnu are called *garuda-basavis* (wives of *garuda*), and have the image of this bird tattooed on their breasts[1] as the distinctive mark of their rank.

The priestesses of Siva are called *linga-basavis*, or *women of the lingam*, and bear this sign tattooed on their thighs.

Though these women are known to be the mistresses of the priests and other dignitaries, still, for all that, they are treated with a certain amount of consideration and respect amongst their own sect.

[1] This bird, which is consecrated to Vishnu, and of which I shall presently speak at greater length, is known by European ornithologists as the Malabar eagle.—DUBOIS.

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CHAPTER XI

Purohitas, or Priests who officiate at Public and Private Ceremonies.—The Hindu Almanac as published by the *Purohitas*.

To settle which are lucky or unlucky days on which to begin or put off an undertaking or expedition; to avert, by *mantrams* and suitable prayers, the curses, spells, or other evil influences of the planets and elements; to purify persons who have become unclean; to give names to newly-born children and draw their horoscopes; to bless new houses, wells, and tanks; to purify dwellings and temples which have become polluted, and also to consecrate the latter; to animate idols and install in them their particular deities by the power of their *mantrams*: these are but a few of the duties which come within the province of the Brahmin *purohitas*, whose services are indispensable on such occasions. The most important of their duties, however, is the celebration of weddings and funerals. The ceremonies on these occasions are so numerous and complicated that an ordinary Brahmin would never be able to get through them all; they can only be learned by special study. Besides, there are *mantrams* and formulas connected with them which are known only to the *purohitas*, and which are described in books of ritual which they take great care to hide from the eyes of all persons outside their own sect. The father makes his son learn these formulas by heart, and thus they descend from generation to generation in the same family. The *purohitas* are not actuated by any pious motives in taking this jealous care of their knowledge and surrounding all their doings with so much mystery; their fear is that rivals may step in who would share the profits which these religious exercises yield.

The consequence is that there are very few Brahmin *purohitas*, and sometimes they have to be fetched from a great distance

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when their ministrations are needed[1]. If they have reason to expect a generous reward, they will start off at once, or at any rate they will send a son who is well versed in their ritual. Sometimes ordinary Brahmins pass themselves off as *purohitas*, especially amongst the Sudras, who are not very particular on this point. These interlopers are unacquainted with the formulas and correct *mantrams*, and so they mumble a few words of Sanskrit or some ridiculous and unintelligible sentences, believing that this is quite good enough for stupid Sudras. But if the real *purohitas*, who from self-interest are always on the alert, discover that their prerogatives have been invaded and their powers usurped, a violent quarrel ensues between them and their sacrilegious rivals.

One of the most valued privileges of the *purohitas* is the right of publishing the Hindu Almanac. The majority of them, being too ignorant to compile it, buy copies every year from those of their brethren who are sufficiently well versed in astronomy to be able to calculate the eclipses and variations of the moon. It must be admitted that these learned Hindus, unacquainted as they are with the analytical operations which in Europe facilitate the computation of the movements of the stars, and having only the most ancient tables wherewith to assist their calculations, require an enormous amount of patience and concentrated attention to produce results which are in any degree trustworthy.

This almanac is an absolute necessity to every *purohita*, since it tells him not only which are the lucky and unlucky constellations, and fortunate or inauspicious days, but also which are the propitious hours in each day; for it is only at these particular moments that the ceremonies can begin at which he is called on to preside. The Brahmins also draw inspiration

[1] A *purohita* is now to be found in almost every village where Brahmins live. He enjoys a *maniam* or free grant of land. In course of time the original family is divided into many families of cousins, who hold office and enjoy the *maniam* in turn. The *purohita* is a Brahmin whose business it is to fix auspicious days for marriages, journeys, and undertakings generally. He presides at the marriage and funeral ceremonies of Sudras, but not at the marriage ceremonies of Brahmins. The Brahmin who presides at the latter is called *upadhiaya*. A *purohita* is sometimes called a *panchangi*, or one who has charge of the *panchangam* or almanac, not a very dignified office.—ED.

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from this book in predicting happy and unhappy events in life. Numbers of people come to consult them on points like these; and it is not the common people only on whom this superstition has such a strong hold, for princes and persons of the highest rank believe in it even more firmly, if that be possible. There is no one in high position who has not one or more official *purohitas* living in his palace; and these men act, so to speak, like rulers of the universe. They go every morning and with ludicrous gravity announce to the prince, to his state elephant, and to his idols, each in their turn, all that is written in the almanac relating to that particular day. Should the prince wish to hunt, walk, or receive visits from strangers, and the perspicacity of the *purohita* discovers in his infallible book that this is an unpropitious moment, the chase, the walk, or the visit is postponed. In large temples a *purohita* is specially retained to read to the idols every morning the predictions for that day contained in the almanac[1].

The Hindu calendar is known by the name of the *panchangam*, which means the five members, because it contains five leading subjects: to wit, the age of the moon in the month; the constellation near which the moon is situated on each particular day; the day of the week; the eclipses; and the positions of the planets. Lucky and unlucky days are also indicated; those, for instance, on which a person may travel towards one of the four cardinal points; for any one who could safely travel to-day towards the north would probably be overtaken by misfortune if he attempted to journey to the south. There are numberless other predictions of a similar nature in the almanac, which it would be tedious to give in detail.

[1] The *panchangam* Brahmin is one who, by studying the almanac, is able to state propitious or unpropitious times. He gets his livelihood by going certain rounds, day by day, from house to house, declaring the condition of things, as per the almanac, and receiving in return a dole consisting, usually, of grain. He is not held in much respect by his own caste people, but he is much looked up to by other castes. He is consulted by his constituents, from time to time, when they wish to know the propitious period for any undertaking, as starting on a journey, making an important purchase, putting on new clothes or new jewels, or when about to take up a new appointment, or when any other important event is contemplated. He is a Smartha by sect; that is, he is really a worshipper of Siva and wears the marks of that god, but at the same time he respects and worships Vishnu.—PADFIELD.

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On the first day of the Hindu year, called *Ugadi*[1], which falls on the first day of the March moon, the *purohita* summons all the principal inhabitants of the neighbourhood to his residence, and there solemnly announces, amidst much music, singing, and dancing, who will be king of the gods and who king of the stars for the year, who will be their prime ministers, and who will command the army; who will be the god of the harvest, and what crops will be most plentiful. He foretells, too, whether the season will be wet or dry, and whether locusts or other insects will, or will not, attack and devour the young plants; whether the insects and vermin, which disturb the repose of the poor Hindu, will be more or less troublesome, more or less numerous; whether it is to be a healthy or unhealthy year; whether there will be more deaths than births; whether there will be peace or war; from what quarter the country will be invaded; who will be victorious, &c.

Those who ridicule the *purohita* and his predictions are the very first to have recourse to him if the country is threatened with any great calamity, such as war, famine, drought, &c. Thus powerful is the sway which superstition exercises over the whole land. It is not only the idolatrous Hindus who give credence to these absurdities; Mahomedans, Native Christians, half-castes, and sometimes even Europeans, are not ashamed to consult the astrologer or *purohita*.

The high-class *purohitas* only expound to Brahmins the oracles contained in the almanac, but many less fortunate Brahmins procure copies for themselves, and reap a rich harvest from the credulity of the lower classes. The *panchangam* serves as an excuse, but it is only another way of demanding alms. This method of earning a livelihood, however, causes them to be despised by persons of their own caste, and they only resort to it when other resources have failed. They always quote their favourite axiom: 'In order to fill one's belly one must play many parts.'

The *purohitas* appear to date back to very ancient times. Most Hindu writers mention them, and, if they are to be believed, the highest honours were paid to these Brahmins in times gone

[1] *Ugadi* is the Telugu New Year's Day. Nowadays there is no music or dancing on the occasion of the *purohita* reading the almanac.—ED.

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by. They and the *gurus* share the duty of preserving intact the ancient customs, and it is they who are loudest in condemning those who violate them.

To them also is due the credit of having preserved from destruction all the books of history or of science that have survived the revolutions by which the country has been so often convulsed.

All the *purohitas* are married, and I believe this to be obligatory, in order that they may minister in Brahmins' houses. A widower would not be admitted, as his very presence would be considered sufficient to bring misfortune [1].

[1] This is only partially applicable nowadays.—ED.

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CHAPTER XII

Mantrams.—Their Efficacy.—The *Gayatri.*—The word '*Aum.*'—Magic *Mantrams.*

THESE famous *mantrams*, which the Hindus think so much of, are nothing more than prayers or consecrated formulas, but they are considered so powerful that they can, as the Hindus say, *enchain the power of the gods themselves. Mantrams* are used for invocation, for evocation, or as spells. They may be either preservative or destructive, beneficent or maleficent, salutary or harmful. In fact, there is no effect that they are not capable of producing. Through them an evil spirit can be made to take possession of any one, or can be exorcised. They can inspire with love or hate, they can cause an illness or cure it, induce death or preserve life, or cause destruction to a whole army. There are *mantrams* which are infallible for all these and many other things besides. Fortunately one *mantram* can counteract the effect of another, the stronger neutralizing the weaker.

The *purohitas* are more familiar with these *mantrams* than any other class of Hindus; but all Brahmins are supposed to be acquainted at any rate with the principal ones, if this Sanskrit verse, which one often hears repeated, is to be believed:—

Devadhînam jagat sarvam,
Mantradhinam ta dêvata
Tan mantram brahmanadhînam
Brahmana mama dêvata.

which means, 'The universe is under the power of the gods; the gods are under the power of *mantrams*; the *mantrams* are under the power of the Brahmins; therefore the Brahmins are our gods.' The argument is plainly set out, as you may see, and these modest personages have no scruples about arrogating

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to themselves the sublime title of *Brahma gods*, or *gods of the earth.*

As an instance of the efficacy of *mantrams*, I will cite the following example, which is taken from the well-known Hindu poem *Brahmottara-Kanda*, composed in honour of Siva :—

'Dasarha, king of Madura, having married Kalavati, daughter of the king of Benares, was warned by the princess on their wedding-day that he must not take advantage of his rights as her husband, because the *mantram of the five letters*, which she had learned, had so purged and purified her that any man who ventured upon any familiarities with her would do so at the risk of his life, unless he had been previously cleansed from all defilements through the same medium. Being his wife she could not teach him this *mantram*, because by doing so she would become his *guru*, and consequently his superior. The next day the husband and wife both went in quest of the great *Rishi*, or penitent, Garga, who, on learning the object of their visit, bade them fast for one day and bathe the following day in the Ganges. Thus prepared the pair returned to the penitent, who made the husband sit down on the ground facing the east, and having seated himself by his side, but facing the west, he whispered these two words in his ear, "*Namah Sivaya*[1]!" Scarcely had the king Dasarha heard these marvellous words when a flight of crows was seen issuing from different parts of his body, which flew away and disappeared; these crows being nothing more or less than the sins which the prince had previously committed.'

'This story,' continues the author, 'is really true. I had it from my *guru* Veda-Vyasa, who learned it himself from the *Para-Brahma*. The king and his wife, thus purified, lived happily together for a great many years, and only quitted this world to join *Para-Brahma*, the Supreme Being, in the abode of bliss.'

When one points out to the Brahmins that these much-vaunted *mantrams* do not produce startling effects in the present day, they reply that this must be attributed to the *Kali-yuga*, that is to say, to the Fourth Age of the world, in which we are now living, a veritable age of iron, when everything has

[1] This means, 'All hail to Siva!' and is the *mantram* of the five letters.—DUBOIS.

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degenerated; a period of calamities and disasters, when virtue has ceased to rule the earth. They maintain, nevertheless, that it is still not at all uncommon for *mantrams* to work miracles, and this they confirm by citing stories which are quite as authentic and credible as the one I have just related.

The most famous and the most efficacious *mantram* for taking away sins, whose power is so great that the very gods tremble at it, is that which is called the *gayatri*. It is so ancient that the Vedas themselves were born from it. Only a Brahmin has the right to recite it, and he must prepare himself beforehand by other prayers and by the most profound meditation. He must always repeat it in a low voice, and take the greatest care that he is not overheard by a Sudra, or even by his own wife, particularly at the time when she is in a state of uncleanness. The following are the words of this famous *mantram*[1]:—

Tat Savitru varenyam bhargo devasya
Dhimahi dhiyo yonah pracho dayat.

It is a prayer in honour of the Sun, one of whose names is *Savitru*. It is a great mystery. Each word, and indeed each syllable, is full of allusions which only a very few Brahmins understand. I have never met any one who was able to give me an intelligible translation or explanation of them. A Brahmin would be guilty of an unpardonable crime and the most terrible sacrilege if he imparted it to an unbeliever. There are several other *mantrams* which are called *gayatri*, but the one mentioned above is that which is most generally used.

After the *gayatri*, the most powerful *mantram* is the mysterious monosyllable *om* or *aum*. Though it is to the interest of the Brahmins to keep the real meaning of this sacred word a profound secret, and though the greater number of them do not

[1] Long after I had finished my first work, I found in No. 27 of the *Asiatic Journal* of 1818 two different English translations of the *gayatri*, the exactitude of which I in no way vouch for, nor can I give any preference to either translation. This, at any rate, is the sense of them:—

1. 'Let us worship the light of God, greater than you, O Sun, who can so well guide our understanding. The wise man always considers this (the Sun) the supreme manifestation of the divinity.'

2. 'Let us worship the supreme light of the Sun, the God of all things, who can so well guide our understanding, like an eye suspended in the vault of heaven.'—DUBOIS.

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understand it themselves, there does not appear to be much doubt that it is the symbolic name of the Supreme Being, one and indivisible, like the word *aum*[1]. This mystic word, which is always pronounced with extreme reverence, suggests an obvious analogy to that ineffable and mysterious Hebrew word *Jehovah*.

Though the Brahmins are supposed to be the sole guardians of the *mantrams*, many others venture to recite them. In some professions they are absolutely indispensable. Doctors, for instance, even when not Brahmins, would be considered very ignorant, and, no matter how clever they might be in their profession, would inspire no confidence, if they were unable to recite the special *mantram* that suited each complaint; for a cure is attributed quite as much to *mantrams* as to medical treatment. One of the principal reasons why so little confidence is placed in European doctors by the Hindus is that, when administering their remedies, they recite neither *mantrams* nor prayers[2].

Midwives must also be acquainted with a good many; and they are sometimes called *mantradaris*, or women who repeat *mantrams*; for there is no moment, according to Hindu superstitions, when *mantrams* are more needed than at the birth of a child. Both the new-born infant and its mother are peculiarly susceptible to the influence of the evil eye, the inauspicious combination of unlucky planets or unlucky days, and a thousand other unpropitious elements. A good midwife, well primed with efficacious *mantrams*, foresees all these dangers and averts them by reciting the proper words at the proper moment.

But the cleverest *mantram* reciters, and at the same time the most feared, are the charlatans who profess to be thoroughly initiated in the occult sciences, such as sorcerers, necromancers, soothsayers, &c. They have in their possession, if they are

[1] The Hindu conception of the word *aum* is thus explained by one authority:—'As long as there has been a Hindu Faith the power of sound has been recognized in the Sacred Word. In that word lie all potencies, for the sacred word expresses the one and latent Being, every power of *generation*, of *preservation*, and of *destruction*. . . . Therefore was it never to be sounded save when the mind was pure, when the mind was tranquil, when the life was noble.'—ED.

[2] Failure to feel the pulse is also regarded by the Hindus as a sure proof of medical ignorance.—ED.

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to be believed, *mantrams* which are capable of working all the wonders which I enumerated at the beginning of this chapter. They recite them for the purpose of discovering stolen property, thieves, hidden treasure, foretelling future events, &c. In a country where superstition, ignorance, and the most extravagant credulity reign supreme, it is no wonder that impostors abound and are able to make a large number of dupes.

The hatred which is felt for these mischievous sorcerers is only equalled by the fear that they inspire; and that is saying a great deal. Woe to any one who is accused of having injured another by his spells! The punishment that is usually inflicted consists in pulling out two front teeth from the upper jaw. When bereft of these two teeth, it is thought the sorcerer will no longer be able to pronounce his diabolical *mantrams* distinctly. If he mispronounces the words his familiar spirit will be angry, and the misfortune that he is trying to bring down upon some one else will, it is thought, fall on his own head.

One day a poor man who lived near me, and who had just undergone this painful punishment, came and threw himself at my feet, protesting his innocence and begging for protection and for advice as to how he could obtain justice. The unfortunate fellow certainly did not look like a sorcerer, but as I had neither the power nor the means of interfering in the affair, I could only offer him my sympathy and assure him how indignant I felt at the iniquitous treatment to which he had been subjected.

There are certain *mantrams* which have a very special signification. They are called *bija-aksharas*, or radical letters; such, for instance, as *hram, hrim, hrom, hroum, hraha*, &c. To those who have the key to the true pronunciation of them and know how to use and apply them, nothing is impossible; there is no limit to the miracles they can perform. The following is an example:—

Siva had initiated a little bastard boy into all the mysteries of these radical letters. The boy was the son of a Brahmin widow, and on account of the stain on his birth had experienced the mortification of being excluded from a wedding feast, to which many persons of his caste had been invited. He revenged himself by simply pronouncing two or three of these

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radical letters through a crack in the door of the room where the guests were assembled. Immediately, by virtue of these marvellous words, all the dishes that had been prepared for the feast were turned into frogs. This wonderful occurrence naturally caused great consternation amongst the guests. Every one was convinced it was due to the little bastard, and fearing worse might happen they all rushed with one accord to invite him to come in. After they had apologized humbly for what had happened he entered the room and merely pronounced the same words backwards, when the frogs suddenly disappeared, and they saw with great pleasure the cakes and other refreshments which had been on the table before.

I will leave it to some one else to find, if he can, anything amongst the numberless obscurations of the human mind that can equal the extravagance of this story, which a Hindu would nevertheless believe implicitly.

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CHAPTER XIII

Explanation of the Principal Ceremonies of the Brahmins and of other Castes.—The *Sam-kalpa.*—*Puja.*—*Aratti.*—*Akshatas.*—*Pavitram.*—Sesamum and *Darbha* Grass.—*Puniaha-vachana.*—*Pancha-gavia.*—Purification of Places where Ceremonies take place.—*Pandals*, or Pavilions made of Leaves.

BEFORE entering into more particular details with regard to the ceremonies of the Brahmins, it is necessary, in order to make the rest of this book intelligible, to begin by giving an explanation of certain terms pertaining to these ceremonies, and also a short summary of the chief objects aimed at. This sketch will suffice to indicate the peculiar tastes and inclinations of the Brahmins, and will no doubt cause my readers to inquire how these men were able to impose so many extravagant absurdities on a people whose civilization dates from such very ancient times, and yet to retain their full confidence.

THE SAM-KALPA.

The chief preparatory ceremony amongst the Brahmins is the *sam-kalpa*, which means literally 'intensive contemplation[1].'

This method of mental preparation must in no instance be omitted before any religious ceremony of the Brahmins. When the *sam-kalpa* has been performed with due meditation, everything that they undertake will succeed; but its omission is alone sufficient to transform all the ceremonies that follow into so many acts of sacrilege which will not pass unpunished. The Brahmin must meditate preliminarily on the following points. He must think—

1. Of Vishnu, meditating upon him as the ruler and preserver of this vast universe, as the author and giver of all good things,

[1] *Sam-kalpa* literally means resolve of the mind, will, purpose, definite intention, determination, desire. It is no ceremony in itself, but is a prelude to every ceremony.—ED.

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and as he who brings all undertakings to a successful issue. With these thoughts in his mind he repeats thrice the name of Vishnu, and worships him.

2. He must think of Brahma. He must remember that there are nine Brahmas, who created the eight million four hundred thousand kinds of living creatures, of which the most important is man; that it is the first of these Brahmas who is ruling at the present time; that he will live for a hundred years of the gods[1]; that his life is divided into four parts, of which the first and half the second are already gone. He must then worship him.

3. He must think of the *Avatara*, or incarnation, of Vishnu in the form of a white pig, which was the shape in which that deity slew the giant Hirannyaksha. After having thoroughly realized the idea that this *Avatara* is the most celebrated of all in the *Kali-yuga*, he worships the pig god.

4. He must think of Manu. He reminds himself that there are fourteen Manus, of which the names are *Svarochisha*, *Tamasa*, *Svayambhuva*, *Raivata*, &c. &c., and that they reign over the fourteen worlds during the hundred gods' years that Brahma's life will last. As *Vaivaswata Manu* is now in power in the *Kali-yuga*, in which the Hindus are living at this present time, he offers him worship.

5. He must think of the *Kali-yuga*. He must recollect that we are at present in the early part of this *yuga*.

6. He must think of *Jambu-Dwipa*. This is the continent in which India is situated. He pictures it to himself as surrounded by a sea of salt water, having in the centre a mountain of gold sixteen thousand *yojanas*[2] high, called *Mahameru*, on the thousand summits of which the gods have fixed their abode. He must remember that at the foot of this mountain on the east side grows the *Jambu-vruksha*, a tree which is a thousand *yojanas* high and as many in circumference; that the juice of the fruits of this tree, which fall of their own accord when ripe, forms a large river which flows towards the west, where it

[1] Each day, according to the reckoning of the gods, is as long as several milliards of years.—DUBOIS.

[2] The ordinary *yojana* is about nine miles, but the sacred *yojana*, which is here mentioned, is very much longer.—DUBOIS.

Yojana literally means the distance driven at a yoking or stretch; equal to four *krosas*, or about nine English miles.—ED.

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mingles its waters with those of the sea; that the water of this river possesses the power of converting everything it touches into gold, for which reason it has been called the *Bangaru-nadi* or Golden River. The Brahmin must not omit to think of this sacred tree, nor yet of the continent of *Jambu-Dwipa*, where it is situated.

7. He must think of the great king Bharata, who at one time governed *Jambu-Dwipa* and whose reign forms one of the Hindu eras.

8. He must think of the side of the *Mahameru* which faces him, that is to say, of the west side of this sacred mountain, if the lives to the west of it, of the east, if he lives to the east of it, &c.

9. He must think of the corner of the world called *Agni-diku*, or the Corner of Fire, over which the god *Agni-Iswara* presides, and which is that part of the world in which India is situated.

10. He must think of the Dravida country, where the Tamil (*Arava*) language is spoken.

11. He must think of the moon's pathway, and the change of one moon to another.

12. He must think of the year of the cycle in which he is living. The Hindu cycle is composed of sixty years, each of which has its own particular name. And he must say aloud the name of the particular year of the cycle in which he is living.

13. He must think of the *ayana* in which he is. There are two *ayanas* in the year, each of which lasts six months—one called the *dakshina-ayana* or southern *ayana*, which includes the time during which the sun is south of the equinoctial line, and the other called *uttara-ayana* or northern *ayana*, which comprises the rest of the year, during which the sun is north of this line. He must pronounce the name of the *ayana* which is then going on.

14. He must think of the *rutu*, or season of the year. There are six *rutus* in the year, each of which lasts two months. He must pronounce the name of the *rutu* in which he is performing the *sam-kalpa*.

15. He must think of the moon. Each moon is divided into two equal parts, one of which is called *Sukla-paksha* and the other *Krishna-paksha*. Each of these divisions lasts fourteen days, and each day has its own special name. He must call to

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mind the division and day of the moon, and pronounce their names.

16. He must think of the day of the week and pronounce the name.

17. He must think of the star of the day. There are twenty-seven in each lunar month, each of which has a name. He must pronounce the name of the one which is in the ascendant on that day.

18. He must think of the *yoga*[1] of the day. There are twenty-seven of these, corresponding to the twenty-seven stars, each with its own name. He must pronounce the name of the *yōga*, as also that of the star.

19. He must think of the *karana*, of which there are eleven in each lunar month, each with its own name. The same formality must be gone through as with the star and the *yoga*.

All these divers objects to which the Brahmin must turn his thoughts when performing the *sam-kalpa* are so many personifications of Vishnu, or rather are Vishnu himself under different names. Besides this ordinary *sam-kalpa*, there is another more elaborate one, which is reserved for grand occasions, and which will be described further on.

This pious introduction to all their ceremonies averts, by virtue of its merits, every obstacle which the evil spirits and giants would put in the way. The name of Vishnu alone, it is true, is sufficient to put them to flight, but nothing can resist the power of the *sam-kalpa*.

Puja, or Sacrifice[2].

Of all the Hindu rites, *puja* is the one that occurs most frequently in all their ceremonies, both public and private, in their temples and elsewhere. Every Brahmin is absolutely obliged to offer it at least once a day to his household gods. There are three kinds of *pujas*—the great, the intermediate, and the small.

The great sacrifice is composed of the following parts:—

1. *Avahana.* The evocation of the deity.
2. *Asana.* A seat is presented to him to sit on.

[1] *Yoga* means conjunction of stars.—Ed.

[2] *Puja* means honour, respect, homage, worship.—Ed.

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3. *Swagata.* He is asked if he has arrived quite safely, and if he met with no accident on the way.

4. *Padya.* Water is offered to him for washing his feet.

5. *Arghya.* Water is presented to him in which flowers, saffron, and sandalwood powder have been placed.

6. *Achamania.* Water is offered that he may wash his mouth and face in the prescribed fashion.

7. *Madhu-parka.* He is offered in a metal vessel a beverage composed of honey, sugar, and milk.

8. *Snana-jala.* Water for his bath.

9. *Bhooshan-abharanasya.* He is presented with cloths, jewels, and ornaments.

10. *Gandha.* Sandalwood powder.

11. *Akshatas.* Grains of rice coloured with saffron.

12. *Pushpa.* Flowers.

13. *Dhupa.* Incense.

14. *Dipa.* A lighted lamp.

15. *Neiveddya.* This last offering is composed of cooked rice, fruit, liquefied butter, sugar and other eatables, and betel.

Before offering these gifts, care should be taken to sprinkle a little water over them with the tips of the fingers. The worshippers then prostrate themselves before the deity.

For the intermediate *puja* the last nine articles are offered; for the lesser, only the last six.

When sacrifices of blood are necessary to appease ill-disposed gods or evil spirits, the blood and the flesh of the animals that have been sacrificed are offered to them.

Arti or Aratti.

This ceremony is performed only by married women and courtesans. Widows would not be allowed, under any circumstances, to participate in it[1].

A lamp made of kneaded rice-flour is placed on a metal dish or plate. It is then filled with oil or liquefied butter and lighted. The women each take hold of the plate in turn and raise it to the level of the person's head for whom the ceremony is being

[1] Widows are not allowed to take part in any of the domestic ceremonies of the Hindus. Their presence alone would be thought to bring misfortune, and if they dared to appear they would be rudely treated and sent away.—Dubois.

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performed, describing a specified number of circles with it. Instead of using a lighted lamp they sometimes content themselves with filling a vessel with water coloured with saffron, vermilion, and other ingredients. The object of this ceremony is to counteract the influence of the evil eye and any ill-effects which, according to Hindu belief, may arise from the jealous and spiteful looks of ill-intentioned persons.

The *aratti* is one of the commonest of their religious practices, and is observed in public and private[1]. It is performed daily, and often several times a day, over persons of high rank, such as rajahs, governors of provinces, generals, and other distinguished members of society. Whenever people in these positions have been obliged to show themselves in public, or to speak to strangers, they invariably call for the courtesans or dancing-girls from the temples to perform this ceremony over them, and so avert any unpleasant consequences that might arise from the baleful glances to which they have been exposed. Kings and princes often have dancing-girls in their employ who do nothing else but perform this ceremony[2].

The *aratti* is also performed for idols. After the dancing-girls have finished all their other duties in the temple, they never fail to perform this ceremony twice daily over the images of the gods to whom their services are dedicated. It is performed with even more solemnity when these idols have been carried in procession through the streets, so as to turn aside malignant influences, to which the gods are as susceptible as any ordinary mortal.

Aratti is also performed for the same purpose over elephants, horses, and other domestic animals.

This superstition about the evil eye is common enough in many European countries. I have seen simple French peasants hastily draw their children away from some stranger or ill-looking person, for fear his glance might cast some spell over the little ones. The same notion was prevalent at the time of the ancient Romans, as Virgil, amongst others, bears witness in the following verse:—

'Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos.'

[1] The word *aratti* itself means trouble, misfortune, pain.—ED.

[2] *Aratti* is performed also when people take children from one village to another, on visits to relations and friends.—ED.

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The Romans too had their god Fascinus, and amulets of the same name were given to children to wear to preserve them from spells of this nature. The statue of the god, placed on the triumphal car, preserved returning conquerors from the malignity of the envious. Hindus call this spell *drishti-dosha*, or the influence of the eye. And they invented the *aratti* to avert and counteract it. Their credulity on this subject is boundless. According to them it is not only animate objects that come under the influence of the *drishti-dosha;* vegetable substances are equally susceptible to it. It is to avert this spell that they stick up a pole in all their gardens and fields that are under cultivation. On the top of this pole they fix a large earthen vessel, well whitened on the outside with lime. This is to attract the attention of malicious persons who may be passing, as it will be the first thing to catch their eye and will thus prevent their spells from producing any disastrous effects on the crops, which otherwise would certainly be affected by the evil influence.

Akshatas.

This is the name given to husked rice coloured with a mixture of saffron and vermilion. There are two kinds of *akshatas*, one specially consecrated by *mantrams*, the other simple coloured rice. The first is used when performing *puja* and in other great ceremonies; the other kind is only a toilet requisite, or is used as an offering of politeness. It is considered good manners to offer some in a metal cup to any one to whom a ceremonious invitation is sent. The latter in return takes a few grains and applies them to the forehead.

The Pavitram [1].

The object of the *pavitram* is to scare away giants, evil spirits, or devils, whose mission it is to bring disasters upon men and mar the ceremonies of the Brahmins. The very sight of the *pavitram* makes them tremble and take to flight.

This powerful amulet consists of three, five, or seven stalks of *darbha* grass plaited together in the form of a ring. Before

[1] The *pavitram* is made of stalks of *darbha* grass. It is worn simply as a mark of sanctification. Three stalks are generally used for funeral ceremonies; two for marriage ceremonies and other auspicious occasions.—Ed.

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beginning any ceremony the presiding *purohita* takes the *pavitram*, and, after dipping it in sanctified water, places it on the ring finger of his right hand. The seeds and oil of sesamum are very nearly as efficacious as the *pavitram*; but the grass they call *darbha* is the most efficacious, for it possesses the virtue of purifying everything that it touches. The Brahmins can do nothing without it. It is the basis of all those pious and meritorious acts which are known by the generic term of *moksharthas*, or deeds which lead to everlasting felicity, and which consist of the *asva-medha* (sacrifice of the horse), the *vaja-peya*, the *raja-suya*, the *sattra-yaga*, and other kinds of *yagnas* which are particularly pleasing to Vishnu[1].

No important action in life can take place without it. That is to say, it is necessary in the *kamyarthas*, which include the *garbha-dana*, the *jata-karma*, the *nama-karma*, the *anna-prasana*, the *chaula*, the *upanayana*, the *simanta*, and marriage[2]. It is in frequent use in the various religious exercises of the Brahmins pertaining to their four states, namely, *Brahmachari*, *Grahastha*, *Vana-prastha*, and *Sannyasi*. In fact this sacred grass, the purity of which is considered unequalled, appears in every religious or civil ceremony.

PUNIAHA-VACHANA.

The literal translation of this word is 'the evocation of virtue,' and it is the name given to the ceremony by which the sacred water is consecrated. They proceed thus:—Having purified a place in the house in the ordinary manner, they sprinkle it with water. Then the officiating Brahmin *purohita* seats himself with his face to the east, and they place before him a banana leaf with a measure of rice on it. At one side is a copper vessel full of water, the outside of which has been whitened with lime; the mouth of the vessel is covered with mango leaves, and it is placed on the rice. Near the copper

[1] *Vaja-peya* = trial of strength; a kind of *soma* sacrifice. *Sattra-yaga* = another great *soma* sacrifice. *Raja-suya* = royal inaugural sacrifice.—ED.

[2] *Kamyarthas* = deeds which lead to worldly happiness. *Garbha-dana* = pregnancy. *Jata-karma* = horoscope writing. *Nama-karma* = naming ceremony. *Anna-prasana* = weaning or food-giving ceremony. *Chaula* = head-shaving ceremony. *Upanayana* = initiation of a pupil. *Simanta* = ceremony of parting the hair, in the case of women six or eight months in pregnancy.—ED.

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vessel they put a little heap of saffron, which represents the god Vigneshwara, to whom they perform *puja*, and for *neiveddya* they offer jaggery (raw sugar) and betel. They then throw a little sandalwood powder and *akshatas* into the copper vessel, while reciting appropriate *mantrams*, with the intention of turning the water which it contains into the sacred water of the Ganges. Finally they offer a sacrifice to the vessel, and for *neiveddya* they offer bananas and betel. The water thus sanctified purifies places and persons that have become unclean.

Pancha-gavia.

I have already explained[1] of what disgusting materials the mixture known by this name is composed. This is the way in which it is consecrated. The house is purified in the usual way. They then bring five little new earthen vessels, into one of which they put milk, into another curds, into a third liquefied butter, into a fourth cow-dung, and into the fifth the urine of a cow. These five little vessels are then placed in a row on the ground on some *darbha* grass, and they perform *puja* in the following manner:—First, they make a profound obeisance before the deity *pancha-gavia*, and they meditate for some time on his merits and good qualities. Some flowers are placed on the five vessels, and for *asana* they make the god an imaginary present of a golden seat or throne. They then offer to each vessel, as *arghya*, a little water, which is poured round them. For *padya*, a little more water is poured out for them to wash their feet, and *achamania* is offered immediately afterwards in the same way. The *snana-jala* is water in which a little *garika* grass has been steeped, which is presented to the god *pancha-gavia*, to enable him to perform his ablutions. The tops of the vessels are then covered with *akshatas*, while they are presented, in imagination of course, with jewels, rich garments, and sandalwood. In conclusion they offer them flowers, incense, a lighted lamp, bananas, and betel as *neiveddya*, and finally make another profound obeisance.

These preliminaries ended, the officiating priest addresses the following prayer to the god *pancha-gavia*, or, what is the same thing, to the substances contained in the five vessels: 'O god *pancha-gavia*, vouchsafe to pardon the sins of all the creatures in the world who offer sacrifice to you and drink

[1] Chapter III.

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you, *pancha-gavia*. You have come proceeding from the body of the cow; therefore I offer you my prayers and sacrifices, in order that I may obtain the remission of my sins and the purification of my body, which are accorded to those who drink you. Vouchsafe also to absolve us, who have offered you *puja*, from all the sins that we have committed either inadvertently or deliberately. Forgive us and save us!'

After this prayer they make another profound obeisance and put the contents of the five vessels into one. Then taking this vessel into his hands, the *purohita* performs the *hari-smarana*[1], drinks a little of this precious liquid, pours a little into the hollow of the hands of all persons present, who also drink it, and keeps the rest for use during the ceremony. Betel is then presented to the Brahmins who are present, after which they disperse.

Nothing can equal the supposed purifying virtues of this mixture. Brahmins and other Hindus frequently drink it to remove both external and internal defilements.

There is also another lustral preparation called *pancha-amrita*, which is composed of milk, curds, liquefied butter, honey, and sugar mixed together. This is not filthy and disgusting like the one previously mentioned, but then it is much less efficacious. It however possesses a certain degree of merit under some circumstances.

The Purification of Places.

Before the performance of any ceremony the place where it is to take place must be previously purified. This is usually the duty of the women, and the principal ingredients required are cow-dung and *darbha* grass. They dilute the cow-dung with water and make a sort of plaster with it, which they spread over the floor with their hands, making zigzags and other patterns as they go on. They then draw wide lines of alternate red and white over this and sprinkle the whole with *darbha* grass, after which the place is perfectly pure. This is the way in which Hindus purify their houses day by day from the defilements caused by promiscuous goers and comers. It is the rule amongst the upper classes to have their houses rubbed over once a day with cow-dung, but in any class it would be considered an

[1] *Hari smarana* means meditating on *Hari*, or Vishnu.—Ed.

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unpardonable and gross breach of good manners to omit this ceremony when they expected friends to call or were going to receive company.

This custom appears odd at first sight, but it brings this inestimable benefit in its train, that it cleanses the houses where it is in use from all the insects and vermin which would otherwise infest them.

Pandals.

All the more important Hindu ceremonies, such as *upanayana*, marriages, &c., take place under canopies made of leaves and branches of trees which are erected with much pomp and care in the courtyard or in front of the principal entrance door of the house. The *pandal* is usually supported by twelve wooden posts[1] or pillars, and covered with foliage and branches of trees. The top or ceiling is ornamented with paintings or costly stuffs, while the whole is hung with garlands of flowers, foliage, and many other decorations. The pillars are painted in alternate bands of red and white. The *pandals* of rich people are often exquisitely decorated. A propitious day, hour, and star are always chosen on which to erect these canopies. Then the relations and friends all assemble to set up the centre pillar, which is called the *muhurta-kal*, and to which they offer *puja* to the accompaniment of music. Under this canopy all the ceremonies connected with the fête take place, and the guests remain underneath it till the end of the performance. The houses of Hindus are not as a rule sufficiently spacious, or in any way well adapted for receiving large numbers of guests, so necessity has suggested this picturesque alternative.

Besides these *pandals*, which are only used on grand occasions, upper-class people generally have a permanent one before their principal entrance door to protect from the sun persons who may come to visit them, and who could not with propriety and due regard to custom be invited to come inside.

[1] Amongst the Sudras it is only those who belong to the Right-hand faction who are allowed to have twelve pillars or posts to their *pandals*. If a Left-hand Sudra, who is only entitled to eleven, should take upon himself to put twelve, a frightful fracas would ensue.—Dubois.

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CHAPTER XIV

Ceremonies to be observed after a Woman's Confinement.—Ceremonies performed over Infants.

JATA-KARMA.

WHEN a Brahmani begins to feel the pangs of child-birth her husband should be near her, so that he may carefully note the date of the month, the day, the star of the day, the *yoga*, the *karana*, the hour, and the moment when the child is born. And to prevent any of these details being forgotten, he puts them down in writing.

The house where a woman is confined, as well as all those who live in it, are unclean for ten days. Before this time is up they must have no intercourse with any one. On the eleventh day all the linen and clothes that have been used during this period are given to the washerman, and the house is purified in the manner I have already described. Then they call in a Brahmin *purohita*. The woman who has just been confined, holding the child in her arms, and with her husband by her side, seats herself on a sort of earthen platform, which is set up in the centre of the house and covered with a cloth. The *purohita* then approaches them, performs the *sam-kalpa*, offers *puja* to the god Vigneshwara, and goes through the ceremony of the *puniaha-vachana*, or consecration of the sacred water. He pours a small quantity of this water into the hands of the father and mother of the child, who drink a portion and pour the rest over their heads. He also sprinkles this water over the house and all who are living in it, and throws what remains down the well. The *purohita* is then presented with some betel and a small gift, after which he departs. This ceremony, which is called *jata-karma*, removes all uncleanness, but the woman who has been confined does not become perfectly pure before the end of

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a month. Until that time has elapsed she must live apart and have no communication with any one[1].

Nama-karma.

On the twelfth day after the birth of the child they give it a name. This is the *nama-karma* ceremony. The house having been duly purified, the father of the child invites his relatives and friends to be present at the ceremonies and at the feast which follows them. The guests go all together to perform their ablutions. On their return they first of all offer the sacrifice to fire called *homam*, in honour of the nine planets. Then the father of the child, holding it in his arms, seats himself on the little raised platform of earth and performs the *sam-kalpa*. By his side is a copper dish full of rice. With the first finger of his right hand, in which he holds a gold ring, he writes on this rice the day of the moon, the name of the day, that of the constellation under which the child was born, and finally the name that he wishes to give him. He then calls the child three times by this name in a loud voice.

This ceremony ended, he gives a present to the presiding *purohita*, distributes betel to all the Brahmins present, and then all take their places at the feast which has been prepared. As soon as it is finished the master of the house again offers betel to his guests, and also presents, if he is rich enough.

The mother of the child does not appear at this ceremony for the reason mentioned at the end of the preceding section.

Anna-prasana.

As soon as the child is six months old he is weaned. Then the *anna-prasana* takes place. The name of this ceremony expresses the idea of feeding the child on solid food for the first time. For this occasion they choose a month, a week, a day, and a star which all combine to give favourable auguries.

[1] This custom closely resembles that which Jewish women were obliged to follow under similar circumstances (Leviticus xii), but the Hindus pay no attention, as did the Israelites, to the difference in the sex of the child. As regards the time during which the uncleanness of the mother lasts, it is just the same with the Hindus whether a boy or a girl is born.—Dubois.

This is wrong. When a mother gives birth to a girl, pollution lasts for forty days; in the case of a boy, only thirty days.—Ed.

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A *pandal* is erected, which is ornamented all round with *toranams*[1], or wreaths of mango leaves, some of which are also hung over the entrance door of the house, the inside of which has been carefully purified by the women. The father of the child sallies forth, provided with a cup full of *akshatas*, to invite his relations and friends to the feast. All the guests, having purified themselves by bathing, assemble under the *pandal*. The mother, holding the child in her arms, and accompanied by her husband, seats herself beside him on the little platform of earth which has been set up in the centre. The *purohita* advances towards them, performs the *sam-kalpa*, offers, firstly, *homam* in honour of the nine planets, then a sacrifice to fire, to which he presents clarified butter and betel for *neiveddya*. When he has finished, the women sing verses expressing their good wishes for the future happiness of the child, and perform *aratti*[2] over him.

The father offers *puja* to his household gods, and a portion of the dishes prepared for the general feast is set apart as *neiveddya* for them.

Then the married women form a procession and sing, while they bring in a new dish of silver-plated copper, which is given by the maternal uncle of the child, and one of those cords made of cotton thread which all Hindus wear round their loins, and to which the little piece of calico is fastened which covers their private parts. They touch the child with these two articles, and then pour some *paramanna*, a mixture composed of rice, sugar, and other ingredients, into the vessel. Recommencing their song, they proceed in the same solemn order towards the household gods and place before them the dish, which is then known as the *dish god*. They make a profound obeisance all together to this new deity; then addressing it and the rest of the deities, they implore them to make the child grow, to give him strength, health, long life, and plenty of this world's goods. Then taking up again the *dish god*, they carry it back, still singing, to the child. They first of all fasten the little cord round its loins. Two of the women then make it open its mouth, while a third pours some of the mixture contained in the dish down its throat.

[1] These *toranams* are always used at times of rejoicing. They are an outward sign of rejoicing, and an announcement that a feast is going on, inviting people to come.—DUBOIS.

[2] See last chapter.

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Instruments of music are playing and the women are singing during the whole of this ceremony. It is terminated by the *aratti*, after which all the Brahmins present are offered *akshatas* consecrated by *mantrams*. Each one takes a pinch of the coloured rice, part of which he puts on the child's head and the rest on his own.

Then they sit down to a feast, and the ceremony is ended by a distribution of betel and a few presents given by the master of the house to his guests.

The Chaula.

Three years after the birth of the child[1] the tonsure, or *chaula*, is made for the first time. The Brahmins who are invited assemble under the *pandal* after having performed their ablutions. The child is brought in by his father and mother, who seat him between them on the little earthen platform. The married women then proceed to perform his toilette. They begin by anointing him from head to foot with oil, after which they wash him with warm water. They then colour his forehead and sundry other parts of his body with powdered sandalwood and *akshatas*, deck him with ornaments, and finally put a long necklace of coral beads round his neck and two bracelets to match on his wrists.

The *purohita* then draws near the child thus adorned and performs the *sam-kalpa*, and also offers *homam* to the nine planets. He next traces on the floor in front of the child a square patch with red earth, which they cover with rice that has the husk on. The idol Vigneshwara is placed on one side, and to it they perform *puja*, offering brinjals[2], raw sugar, and betel for *neiveddya*.

The child is made to sit near the square patch, and the barber, after offering worship to his razor[3], proceeds to shave the child's head, leaving one lock at the top, which is never cut. While the barber is performing his part of the

[1] Only the male child.—Ed.

[2] *Beringela* in Portuguese, a purple vegetable shaped something like a fig.—Dubois.

This is wrong. *Brinjals* are never offered to an idol.—Ed.

[3] This act of worship, which the barber always performs before shaving any one, consists in putting the razor to his forehead.—Dubois.

The same practice is observed by all artisans.—Ed.

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ceremony, the women sing, musical instruments are played, and all the Brahmins present remain standing in perfect silence. As soon as the barber has finished, they throw him the money due to him. This he picks up, and before retiring he also carries off the rice that has been scattered over the square patch.

The child is immediately put into a bath to purify him from the defiling touch of the barber. Then his toilette is begun anew. The women perform the ceremony of *aratti*, and the *purohita* for the second time performs the *homam* to the nine planets. The entertainment generally ends with a feast and the distribution of presents to the Brahmins. The musicians are then paid, and receive besides their money a measure of rice each.

The ears of children of both sexes are pierced at about the same age. This is an occasion for another feast, very closely resembling the preceding ones. The goldsmith performs the operation with a very fine gold wire, and the size of the hole is gradually increased from time to time. The hole is generally made larger in the ears of girls, so that they may wear larger ornaments. In some provinces both men and women have the holes as large as a Spanish piastre.

However odd these customs may appear to us, at any rate they have the advantage of bringing the Brahmins often together and obliging them to fulfil their mutual obligations. And they certainly help to form a class of men who in tone and manners are infinitely superior to other Hindus.

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PART II

THE FOUR STATES OF BRAHMINICAL LIFE

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CHAPTER I

The *Brahmachari.*—Ceremony of the *Upanayana*, or Investiture of the Triple Cord.

In this Second Part I will bring to notice the most remarkable peculiarities of the Brahmin caste, the one of all others which clings most tenaciously to long established customs. Europeans have possessed up to the present time but very imperfect information on this subject, and what little information has been obtained has been taken as it were by stealth from the Brahmins, whose constant endeavour it is to veil their customs in mystery. I think that the details I am about to give will in consequence be found of considerable interest. These customs, however, do not belong exclusively to the Brahmin caste; some of them are common to other castes as well.

The life of a Brahmin has to be considered under four important aspects. The first is that of the young Brahmin who has been invested with the triple cord, and who is from that time called *Brahmachari*. The second is that of the Brahmin who has married, and who is thenceforward, but especially after he has become a father, called *Grahastha*. The third is that of the Brahmin who, renouncing the world, retires into the jungles with his wife, and who is then known as *Vana-prastha* (or dweller in the jungle). The fourth, and last, is the state of

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Sannyasi, or that of the Brahmin who decides to live entirely in solitude, apart even from his wife, a mode of life considered even more edifying than *Vana-prastha*.

It is well known that all Brahmins wear a thin cord[1], hung from the left shoulder and falling on to the right hip. It is composed of three strands of cotton, each strand formed by nine threads. The cotton with which it is made must be gathered from the plant by the hand of a pure Brahmin, and carded and spun by persons of the same caste, so as to avoid the possibility of its being defiled by passing through unclean hands. After a Brahmin is married his cord must have nine and not three strands[2].

Brahmins, and all the other castes which have the right to wear this cord, prize it more highly and are certainly more proud of it than are many Europeans who by noble birth or great deeds possess the right to wear the *cordon* of the knightly orders.

Children from the age of five to nine are invested with this cord. March, April, May, and June are considered the most favourable months for the investiture. As the ceremony entails a considerable outlay, the poorer Brahmins go from house to house begging and collecting funds with which to defray the necessary expenses; and natives of all castes believe that in making such contributions they are performing a pious act.

This ceremony is called the *upanayana*, which means 'introduction to knowledge,' for by it a Brahmin acquires the right to study. Several of the rites performed on this occasion are also performed at the marriage ceremony, so I will only describe here those which are peculiar to the cord ceremony, and I will describe later on those common to both. The

[1] This cord is called *yagnopavitam* in Sanskrit, *jandemu* in Telugu, *punul* in Tamil, *jenivara* in Canarese.—Dubois.

[2] The number three, adopted, and so to say consecrated, in this and in many other instances, is evidently used in an allegorical sense. I am rather inclined to believe that it refers to the three principal divinities of India—Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.—Dubois.

The Abbé is incorrect as to the number of strands. After marriage a Brahmin *must* wear six, and *may* wear nine. The triple cord is thus explained by one authority: 'It symbolizes the body, speech, and mind. It symbolizes the control of each; and therefore when the knots are tied in it, it means that the man who wears the thread has gained control over body, speech, and mind.'—Ed.

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following details are extracts from the ritual of the *purohitas*, which bears the title of *Nitya Karma*.

To begin with, the father of the candidate must provide himself with many pieces of cotton cloth and plenty of small gold and silver coins, to be given as presents to the guests. He must also have a large supply of rice, flour, fresh and dried vegetables, fruit, oil of sesamum, clarified butter, and milk in various forms, &c., for the feast; sandalwood, vermilion, saffron; and, above all things, plenty of betel-leaf and areca-nut. Further, there must be in abundance earthen vessels of all kinds, shapes, and sizes, seeing that on each of the four days that the feast lasts new ones will be required; those which have been once used on this occasion, as on that of a marriage, being always broken into little pieces. When everything is ready, the father goes to consult the *purohita*, or family priest, to ascertain what day will be most propitious. The *purohita* having fixed a day, a *pandal*, or pavilion, is erected. The preliminary ceremonies and purifications are gone through, and the invitations issued in the customary manner. Meanwhile, the women decorate the walls of the house, both inside and out, with alternate broad bands of red and white paint. When the guests have arrived and are all assembled under the *pandal*, the *purohita* makes his appearance, bringing with him a cord and an antelope's skin [1].

Having performed the *sam-kalpa*, he offers *puja*, or adoration, to Vigneshwara, who is represented by a small conical heap of fresh cow-dung, placed in the centre of the *pandal*. He also makes to him offerings of *garika* [2], sandalwood, *akshatas*, or coloured rice, incense, and a lighted lamp.

This god Vigneshwara, or Pillayar, or Ganesa [3], &c., of whom we shall frequently have occasion to speak, is the god of obstacles, as his name denotes. He is of a morose and irascible disposition, and always ready to annoy and thwart those who fail to pay him sufficient respect. It is for this reason

[1] The antelope's skin is used as a mat on which the priest sits. The skins of both the antelope and the tiger are considered extremely pure; consequently one may sit on them without fear of defilement.—DUBOIS.

[2] *Garika* in Canarese, *arugu* in Tamil, *durva* in Sanskrit—a kind of millet-grass, *Panicum dactylon*.—ED.

[3] Ganesa literally means god of the inferior deities.—ED.

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that so much deference is shown to him, and that on grand feast-days his good offices are the first to be invoked, his worshippers fearing lest he should take it into his head to disturb the feast and bring it to an untimely end.

The sacrifice to Vigneshwara ended, the master of the house presents betel-nut to the Brahmins, and then they all proceed to make their ablutions. On their return, the neophyte is made to sit on a raised platform of earth in the centre of the *pandal*. The married women chant sacred songs, while they proceed to adorn him as for the ceremony of the *chaula*, though on this occasion the garments are even richer and more costly; and finally they delicately pencil his eyelids with antimony[1].

His toilette finished, the father and mother of the candidate seat themselves by his side on the daïs, and the women perform the ceremony of the *aratti*. *Puja* is offered to the household gods, and for *neiveddya*, or votive offering, portions of all the dishes prepared for the feast are set aside. The guests then seat themselves on the ground, in rows, the women placing themselves so as not to be seen by the men. The women belonging to the household bring in the rice and the various dishes which have been prepared for the feast, helping everything with their fingers, the use of spoons being unknown amongst them. Each guest receives his portion on a banana leaf, or on other leaves sewn together, which are never used more than once. When the meal is over, betel and areca-nut are distributed, and the guests then separate.

The following day is called the *muhurta*, or great day; it is that on which the actual investiture takes place. The guests are invited to reassemble as on the preceding day.

The would-be recipient is seated on the daïs, between his father and mother, all three having their faces turned towards the east. His loins are girt with a 'pure' cotton cloth, that is to say, either a new one, or at least one that has been newly washed[2]. The married women perform his toilette, singing all the while.

[1] This is a kind of ointment formerly used by other nations. It is still a common practice amongst the people of India to ornament the faces of their children with it. Courtesans and beauties, too, often use it. It certainly enhances the brilliancy of the eyes, and is a pleasing addition to a handsome face.—DUBOIS.

[2] It is not only on this occasion that a 'pure' cloth is obligatory. Each time that a Brahmin bathes he washes his clothing, to purify it.—DUBOIS.

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The *purohita* then approaches, holding in his hands an earthen chafing-dish full of hot embers. He performs the *sam-kalpa*, and then formally consecrates the pan of hot coals, which by virtue of his *mantram* becomes a god. To this he offers the sacrifice called *homam*, throwing on the fire some pieces of the *aswatta*, or sacred fig-tree, some cooked rice, and some melted butter. After this nine specially selected Brahmins offer the same sacrifice of the *homam* in honour of the nine planets. Then each having chosen a married woman, they all go off together, still singing, to convey the sacred fire to some place apart, where it must be carefully attended to and kept burning until the last day of the festival. It would be considered a very bad omen if, from inattention or any other cause, this fire were to be extinguished sooner.

The inauguration of the *ishta devata* (or tutelary deity) immediately follows. The married women provide themselves with a large copper vessel, which must be new and whitewashed outside. They take it, preceded by instruments of music, to be filled from a well or river. On returning to the house they place some mango leaves over the mouth of the vessel, and on the top of the leaves a cocoanut; coloured yellow with powdered saffron. The vessel is then wrapped in a woman's cloth which has been dyed the same colour, and is placed on the ground, on the top of a small heap of rice. Round its neck are then hung two palm leaves, rolled up and coloured red, and also a necklace of small black seeds, and a few other female ornaments. The *purohita* then invokes the tutelary deity and invites him to settle on the vessel, which becomes from that moment a female divinity, to whom the women promptly make an offering of flowers, incense, *akshatas*, a lighted lamp, and some betel-leaf. The mother of the young man then places the vessel, i. e. the new goddess, on her head, and accompanied by the other women, all singing in chorus, and preceded by the musicians, makes a solemn progress round the village, under a kind of canopy. On returning to the house she replaces the vessel, and, with the assistance of some of the other women, drapes round the two central pillars of the *pandal* two perfectly new cloths of the kind worn by women. The same procession then starts again to fetch some mould from ant-heaps raised by *karraiyan*[1]. With this

[1] These are the white ants so common in India, and so destructive.—DUBOIS.

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they fill five small pots. These again are sown with nine kinds of seed, which are well sprinkled with milk and water, to make them sprout quickly.. The *purohita* approaches the five pots, and by virtue of his *mantrams*, or incantations, turns them also into divinities. The women then perform the customary acts of *puja* before them, and after prostrating themselves place them close to the tutelary deity. Then comes the invocation of gods, planets, and ancestors. I shall give full particulars of this ceremony when describing a marriage.

During the invocation to the gods a piece of saffron-coloured thread is attached to the right wrist of the neophyte. A barber then cuts the nails of his fingers and toes and shaves his head, to the sound of instrumental music and the songs of the women.

The young Brahmin next proceeds to bathe, in order to purify himself after having been defiled by the barber's touch. After his ablutions the women again dress him in pure new cloths.

He is then purified by the *purohita's* incantations from all the sins committed through youthful ignorance since the day of his birth. The *purohita* also makes him a girdle of plaited *darbha*, or sacred grass (*Poa cynosuroides*), and winds it three times round his body, reciting *mantrams* all the time. At this juncture some small coins are distributed to all the Brahmins present. A *muduga*[1] stick, three cubits long, is then produced, and also ten pieces of rag such as are used by men in the East to cover their private parts[2]. These are dyed yellow in saffron water, and are hung in a row on the *muduga* stick, which the candidate puts over his shoulders. The *purohita* then recites the 'neck *mantram*' and invests the youth with the triple cord, which constitutes him a Brahmin. During this solemn performance the women sing, the musicians play, bells are rung, and to add to the uproar all present make as much noise as they can by striking gongs or anything else they can lay their hands on.

After his investiture the newly initiated member takes part in what is known as the *young men's feast*[3], which is prepared for

[1] *Butea frondosa*. In Sanskrit *palasa*.—ED.

[2] Many natives only wear this diminutive covering. It is as small as is compatible with any regard to modesty.—DUBOIS.

[3] In Sanskrit *kumara bhojanam*. Only *Brahmacharis* partake of this feast, each being presented also with a new cloth.—ED.

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him and for other young Brahmins who have recently been invested with the cord.

At the termination of the repast the young man again seats himself on the raised platform of earth, facing the east. His father seats himself by his side, but with his face turned towards the west. A cloth is then thrown over them, hiding them from the eyes of the assembly. Again the women begin to sing, and the musicians to play. Meanwhile the father is whispering in his son's ear the secrets and *mantrams* which in his new position as a duly initiated Brahmin it is fitting for him to know. It is said that the following remarkable words form part of the discourse:—

'Remember, O my son, that there is only one God, who is the Creator, Lord, and Source of all things; whom every Brahmin should worship in secret. But know also that this is a great mystery that must never be revealed to the vulgar and ignorant people. Should you ever reveal it, surely great misfortune will fall upon you.'

These instructions, however, being given in Sanskrit, are not likely to be understood by the youth in whose ears they are uttered.

The Brahmins present then place *akshatas*, consecrated by *mantrams*, on the head of their new colleague, and the women perform the ceremony of *aratti*. Betel is afterwards served out to the guests, who, after bathing, return for the feast, which should on this day be on a particularly splendid and liberal scale.

The same evening, just when the lamps are being lighted, parents and friends again assemble under the *pandal*, and the newly initiated member seats himself on the earthen daïs once more. The married women then go and fetch the pan containing the sacred fire, which is solemnly placed beside him, much singing going on the while. The *purohita* performs the *samkalpa* and recites *mantrams* over this fire, while singers and musicians start afresh with renewed vigour. The young Brahmin, standing over the coals, offers for the first time in his life the sacrifice called *homam*, which, by his investiture with the cord, he has now acquired the right to do. After this sacrifice, and another, which the youth performs specially to the fire, the women make a procession and carry back the pan of

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coals to its place, returning to perform *aratti* to the young Brahmin. The day terminates with a further distribution of betel to the Brahmins, after which they all separate.

On the third day there is the same assembly again, and for the most part a repetition of the ceremonies of the preceding day, particularly that of the *homam*; while the day's proceedings are terminated as before by a feast.

The ceremonial of the fourth and last day has a few additional peculiarities. After a repetition of the usual preliminaries, the women of the party form a procession and, singing all the time, go and fetch the sacred fire, which they set down close to the newly initiated member, who, standing up, places a few stalks of *darbha* grass round the pan of hot embers. He then performs *homam* by throwing on to the brazier some twigs of the sacred fig-tree, some cooked rice, some liquefied butter, and some coarse sugar.

Thence they go to the tutelary deity, and having offered *puja* to him, they invite him to depart as he came. At the same time a little of the sacramental water from the deified vessel is poured into the hand of each person present, who forthwith drinks it, the remainder being thrown away. The deity is also despoiled of his yellow cloth and of the saffron thread with which he was decorated. After a few prayers have been addressed to these different objects, the divine essence is supposed to escape from them.

The saffron-coloured thread which was fastened round the wrist of the new member is now taken off and put to soak in some milk.

One large new earthen vessel and five smaller ones, all with lids, are then brought, smeared on the outside with lime. The five smaller vessels are filled with water to begin with, and are then all emptied into the larger one. The lid of the larger vessel is put on, and it is then placed against the central pillar of the *pandal*, to which is suspended a wreath of flowers falling exactly over the mouth of the vessel. An offering is made to it of sandalwood, coloured rice, and flowers, and for *neiveddya*, or votive offering, cakes and cooked rice. All those present are then sprinkled with the ceremonial water contained in the vessel. Then they go on to the five little vessels before mentioned, which are filled with earth. *Puja* is offered to them, and they are then placed in a row, receiving severally the name of one of

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the following five divinities: Brahma, Vishnu, Varuna, Rudra, and Devendra. They are then carried separately, and placed at the foot of five of the pillars supporting the *pandal*. They are invoked in the names which have just been given them, *puja* is offered to them, and the divinities are finally invited to return whence they came. *Puja* is offered to the five little pots, and the celestial beings they have been representing are also invited to retire. Then comes the turn of all the gods in general, the planets, and the ancestors whose presence was invoked at the beginning of the feast. Litanies are recited in their honour, and they too are politely invited to depart. Then the praises of the *mantapam* deity, that is to say, of the *pandal* itself, are sung; and he also is dismissed. Then the women, singing all the time, perform the *aratti* to the new member; and every one being seated for the feast, the new Brahmin takes his place amongst the elders of the caste. After the meal is over he is presented to each of the principal guests in succession, and does *sashtanga*, or prostration, to them; they, on their part, congratulate him on his promotion, and wish him every good fortune. In conclusion, the master of the house distributes money amongst his guests, also pieces of cloth, the value of which is in proportion to the wealth of the giver. A cow is occasionally added to the other gifts.

Brahmins everywhere are unsurpassed in the art of flattery; and on these occasions they laud to the very skies those who have been prodigal in their gifts. Their liberality is exalted in all directions, and the most exaggerated eulogies are lavished on them. The recipients of all this ridiculous flattery are generally sufficiently idiotic to be gratified by it, and consider that it amply repays them for the enormous outlay which their childish vanity has caused them to incur.

Before separating, all the guests, both men and women, accompany the new Brahmin, who is seated in an open palanquin, richly ornamented, on a solemn procession through the streets. On their return, the women, in songs, tell him of all the prayers that they have offered for his future happiness, and they wind up the feast by the ceremony of *aratti*. As for the new Brahmin, he must be careful to perform the *homam*, evening and morning, for the next thirty days.

Such are the formalities which accompany the most important

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and solemn event in a Brahmin's life. As we have remarked already, it is not by birth alone that a Brahmin is superior to other men. It is this regenerating ceremony which gives him a new existence and makes him worthy to be elevated in his capacity as a *dvija*, or twice-born (*bis genitus*), to the sublime status of his ancestors.

All this long ceremonial, besides many other foolish trifles which I have not thought worth mentioning, is strictly obligatory. Were a single detail omitted, the whole community would raise a chorus of protest. It would be labour lost to endeavour to discover the origin of these ceremonies. Some few traces of it might be discovered in the old pagan times; but assuredly no other nation in the world has preserved so completely the minutest details of its ancient superstitions.

Some other Hindus share with the Brahmins the honour of wearing the triple cord. They are the Jains, the Kshatriyas or Rajahs, the Vaisyas, and even the Panchalas. Rajahs receive the cord from the hands of a Brahmin *purohita;* but the only ceremony necessary on this occasion is the sacrifice called *homam.* The new member then gives a great feast to the Brahmins to celebrate the event, but he is not allowed to be present himself; and further, he also distributes gifts amongst them. Before they depart he is admitted to their presence, and performs the *sashtanga*, perhaps in token of gratitude for the honour they have done him, or else merely to abase himself before these 'gods of the earth.'

If the Hindu books are to be believed, the Brahmins used formerly to exercise such supreme power over the kings and rulers of the country that they were looked upon by the latter as beings of a different order, and superior to other mortals; princes accounting it an honour to receive some mark of distinction from them. And the Brahmins, on their part, either to enhance their own dignity, or perhaps from gratitude for the favours they received from the Rajahs, granted them the special privilege of wearing, like themselves, the triple cord.

As for the Vaisyas, they do not receive it till the day of their marriage, when the officiating Brahmin presents it to them. The Panchalas are also decorated under similar circumstances, but it is conferred on them by the *guru*, or priest, of their own caste.

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After a Brahmin has been invested, he is expected to keep the anniversary every year at the time of the full moon in the month of *Sravana*, or August. This anniversary is always celebrated by a feast, for which there are many prescribed ceremonies; but I will spare the reader any further wearisome details. Suffice it to say that the Brahmin has to change his cord, the small rag in front of his private parts, and the cloth with which his loins are girt, all of which is done with much solemnity. The performance of this periodical duty obtains for him the remission of all the sins committed during the year, and it is therefore called the Feast of the Annual Atonement.

The Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas also keep this annual feast like the Brahmins.

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CHAPTER II

Conduct of the *Brahmachari*.—Rules to be followed.—Rights acquired by investiture with the Cord.—The Six Privileges of Brahmins.—The Vedas.

THE state of *Brahmachari* continues from the ceremony of the *upanayana* until marriage. This period of his life is looked upon as a time of study, of trial, of subordination, and of initiation into the rules and regulations of caste. To learn to read and write; to commit the Vedas and *mantrams* to memory; to study in those branches of knowledge for which he shows any aptitude, that is, if his parents are sufficiently wealthy to be able to give him masters; above all things, to learn arithmetic in its elementary forms, and to study the various idioms of the language: these are the occupations that fill up his days. The Brahmins have their separate schools, to which children of other castes, particularly Sudras, are never admitted. The nature of their studies, the discipline and mode of teaching, the very principles of education, are all totally different in the one and in the other. The *Brahmachari* must never chew betel; he must never put flowers in his turban or in his hair, or ornament his forehead with the paste of sandalwood [1]; and he must never look in a looking-glass. Every day, morning and evening, he must perform the *homam*, or sacrifice of fire. He must take the greatest pains to conform to the rules and customs of his caste; he must show the most absolute and prompt obedience to his parents and his teachers; he must be modest, deferential and respectful to his superiors, and affable to his equals. His family and his masters take particular care to instruct him in the art of lying and dissimulation, cunning and deceit [2], qualities which are fully developed in all Brahmins,

[1] This is incorrect. The use of this paste on the forehead is obligatory, though the smearing of it on the body is forbidden until after marriage.—ED.

[2] There is no truth in such an assertion. These evil qualities are never deliberately inculcated.—ED.

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and form the principal traits in their character. There are, besides, hundreds of minute details most essential in a Brahmin's education, comprising rules of good manners and decorous conduct, the art of speaking and conversing in well-chosen language, the appropriate demeanour to assume on different occasions, how to hold oneself and how to use one's eyes, the different degrees of *hauteur* or humility which should be shown under various circumstances and at different times and places according to the people who are present.

Nevertheless, in spite of the stress which is laid upon these petty precepts governing the conduct of young Brahmins, there are few who conform to them in all essentials. Even of the rules of conduct many are merely matters of form. Nothing is more common than to see their foreheads ornamented with sandalwood paste and their mouths full of betel [1].

If, from want of means or other causes, a young Brahmin is still unmarried at the age of eighteen or twenty, he ceases to be a *Brahmachari*, but at the same time he does not become a *Grahastha*. For all that, be his age and condition what they may, from the time that he receives the cord, he obtains the right to the six privileges which are inherent in this status. These privileges are: (1) to read the Vedas, (2) to have them read to him, (3) to perform the sacrifice of the *yagnam*, (4) to cause the *yagnam* to be performed, (5) to give, and also (6) to receive, presents and alms. Three of these privileges, (2), (4), and (5), are also shared by the Kshatriyas or Rajahs. As to the despised Sudras, they possess only one of them, namely, that which allows them to give alms or presents to those Brahmins who will condescend to accept them from their impure hands.

To the Brahmins alone belongs the right of reading the Vedas, and they are so jealous of this, or rather it is so much to their interest to prevent other castes obtaining any insight into their contents, that the Brahmins have inculcated the absurd theory, which is implicitly believed, that should anybody of any other caste be so highly imprudent as even to read the titlepage, his head would immediately split in two. The very few Brahmins who are able to read these sacred books in the

[1] The chewing of betel by *Brahmacharis* is, nevertheless, an uncommon occurrence.—ED.

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original only do so in secret and in a whisper. Expulsion from caste, without the smallest hope of re-entering it, would be the lightest punishment for a Brahmin who exposed these books to the eyes of the profane.

These four marvellous books are held to be the work of Brahma himself, who wrote them with his own hand on pages of gold. Brahma, it is said, explained their meaning to four famous *Munis*, or penitents, to whom the books were entrusted, and to whom was confided the task of explaining them to the Brahmins. Sumantu, the first of these celebrated personages, was given the *Yajur-Veda;* Pailada, the *Rig-Veda;* Jaimini, the *Sama-Veda;* and Angirasa, the *Atharva-Veda*[1].

But let it not be imagined for one moment that these books contain matter of much interest. Their antiquity alone, real or pretended, is their sole recommendation. A lengthy exposition of Hindu polytheism as it existed originally, the most contemptible and ridiculous stories concerning the fanciful penances to which their hermits subjected themselves, the metamorphosis of Vishnu, the disgusting *lingam*, &c.; such are, according to the evidence which I have acquired, more or less an epitome of the contents of these books, of which the Brahmins make such a great mystery[2].

The fourth of these books, the *Atharva-Veda*, is the most baneful work of all in the hands of a people already given over to the grossest superstition. It is a sort of conjuring book, professing to teach the magic art of injuring by means of spells and enchantments. Bloody sacrifices are also ordained in it.

It is from these books that the Brahmins have unearthed the greater number of those *mantrams* which bring them in so much money, and cause them to be held in such high

[1] Mahidhara, on the *Vajasaneyi Sanhita* (Weber's ed. p. 1), says in regard to the division of the Vedas: 'Vedavyasa, having regard to men of dull understanding, in kindness to them, divided into four parts the Veda which had been originally handed down by tradition from Brahma, and taught the four Vedas, called Rig, Yajush, Saman, and Atharvan, in order, to Paila, Vaisampayana, Jaimini, and Sumantu; and they again to their disciples. In this way, by tradition, the Veda of a thousand Sakhas was produced.'—Ed.

[2] The Vedas and other sacred Hindu writings are now, of course, available to any student. The Abbé's sweeping assertion would not now be endorsed.—Ed.

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esteem. This, in fact, is what renders the Vedas so precious to the Brahmins.

Such Brahmins as devote themselves to the higher branches of knowledge learn the Vedas by heart; and though the greater number do not understand the real meaning of what they have learnt, still they are looked upon in some sort as doctors of theology, and are given the name of *Veidikas*. It is true, nevertheless, that those who devote themselves to the study of these books cannot hope to extract any instruction from them, for they are written in ancient Sanskrit, which has become almost wholly unintelligible; and such numberless mistakes have been introduced by copyists, either through carelessness or ignorance, that the most learned find themselves quite unable to interpret the original text. Out of twenty thousand Brahmins I do not believe that one could be found who even partially understood the real Vedas.

The original text must not, as is often done, be confounded with the more modern introductions and commentaries written by the penitent Vyasa. These were interpolated with the view of rendering the text more intelligible. They are known under the general name of *Upanishads*, and are three in number—the *Upa-Veda*, the *Karma-Veda*, and the *Sakha-Veda*. It is not much more than these commentaries that the most learned of modern Brahmins are capable of explaining. Their meaning is unintelligible except to those who have a considerable acquaintance with Sanskrit, the language in which they are written. Many learn to read and recite them mechanically, without understanding a word of them.

In the *agraharas*, or Brahmin villages, and other places where Brahmins congregate in large numbers, you may perhaps come across some who are Sanskrit scholars, but even they would be unable to produce a good interpretation of the Vedas. Some Brahmins give gratuitous instruction in those parts of the Vedas which, thanks to the commentaries, have been made intelligible, while other Brahmins, too poor to forgo remuneration, hold classes in which the same instruction is given to paying pupils.

Rich Brahmins make a point of encouraging the study of the Vedas by offering prizes and other rewards, this being in the eyes of their fellows a work of the greatest merit.

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The Brahmins have done the Rajahs the honour of allowing them also to encourage the study of the Vedas by founding schools for that purpose and paying the professors. And I am convinced that nowadays they would not refuse a similar honour even to a common Sudra. But be that as it may, there is not much eagerness displayed amongst the Brahmins for this tedious kind of study. Poverty prevents some from taking it up, while indifference and idleness prevent others.

In the *yagnam*, a name which comprises the third and fourth Brahminical privileges, the sacrifice called *homam* is apparently included, for the *homam* of the Rajahs is totally different. Every Brahmin must perform the *homam* at least once a day. It is a sacrifice offered to fire under various circumstances[1].

This sacrifice is made by lighting a brazier, which is then consecrated by *mantrams*. Into this are thrown small pieces of wood, gathered from one of the seven sacred trees, and afterwards a little melted butter and cooked rice; these offerings being accompanied by suitable *mantrams*. The *homam* is almost invariably followed by another sacrifice, which is specially offered to fire, but only the ordinary *puja* is performed. I think by the word *yagnam* may be understood all sacrifices which are accompanied by *mantrams*.

The fifth privilege of the Brahmins, namely, the giving of alms and presents, is much less to their taste than the sixth, in which the operation is reversed. It must, however, be admitted that rich Brahmins display a lavish hospitality, besides being charitable in other ways. But this is only to members of their own caste; the rest of the human race is, if not detested, at least absolutely of no account so far as they are concerned.

Amongst the gifts which Brahmins are willing to receive there are some which are more specially acceptable. They are called the *pancha-danas*, or the five gifts; and they are gold, land, clothes, grain, and cows. The last-mentioned gift causes them particular pleasure, seeing that milk in various forms is their principal food. Brahmins also possess large landed properties

[1] The sacrifice made to fire, or by means of fire, is a form of idolatry by no means peculiar to the Hindus. It is well known to what great lengths Persians, Chaldeans, and other ancient races carried superstition with respect to it.—DUBOIS.

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originally given them by generous princes and on which they pay no taxes. These descend from father to son, and always retain their immunity from taxation. As a rule Brahmins do not cultivate their lands themselves, but lease them out to the Sudras, taking half the crops as rent.

The Brahmins generally live on their lands, which are called *agraharas*. Numbers of these estates are to be found in the various provinces of the Peninsula.

Then again, in their character as high priests, the Brahmins gather in the greater part of the revenue of the lands belonging to the different temples, and furthermore receive all the offerings brought by devotees to the various idols.

A Brahmin sees nothing humiliating in asking for or receiving alms. According to his ideas it is a right, of which he may make free use. His attitude when begging is also very unlike that of the poor wretch amongst ourselves, who fawns and grovels for the smallest trifle. The Brahmin asks for alms as for something that is his due, and not as if imploring a favour or benefit. At the same time he displays none of the importunity or impertinence to which people are subjected by the Mahomedan *fakirs*, or by the Sudra beggars who belong to the sects of Siva or Vishnu. The begging Brahmin boldly enters a house and states what he wants. Should he receive anything, he takes it without saying a word, goes away without any acknowledgement and without showing the smallest sign of gratitude. Should he meet with a refusal, however, he retires without any complaint or grumbling[1].

But woe betide any one who ventures to make the Brahmins promises which he subsequently fails to perform! That would

[1] Manu says: 'Let every man, according to his ability, give wealth to Brahmins, detached from the world and learned in Scripture; such a giver shall attain heaven after this life' (xi. 6). Very early in the statutes, a universal law is proclaimed, the spirit of which pervades the whole code. This law calmly lays down that whatever exists in the universe is all, in effect, though not in form, the wealth of the Brahmins; since the Brahmin is entitled to it all by his primogeniture and eminence of birth. 'The Brahmin eats but his own food; wears but his own apparel; and bestows but his own alms; through the benevolence of the Brahmin indeed other mortals enjoy life' (i. 100–101). This is a pretty broad principle to enunciate, so it is easy to see how there is nothing derogatory in a Brahmin receiving alms, since he takes but what is his own, besides leaving a blessing to the giver.—PADFIELD.

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be a fearful sin, which could not fail to draw down the divine wrath upon the guilty person. A Hindu author gives the following example as a proof. 'Hata! Hata![1]' cried a monkey one day, seeing a fox devouring a rotten carcase. 'In a former state of existence you must have committed some atrocious crimes to be condemned in your present life to eat such disgusting food.' 'Alas!' replied the fox with a groan, 'it is only what I deserve. Once upon a time I was a man, and I then promised a Brahmin a present, and failed to keep my word; that is why I was born again in my present condition, which you find so revolting.'

Brahmins declare that he who fails to keep faith with them, or who injures them in any way, will be condemned after death to be born again as a devil. Such a person could live neither on the earth nor yet in the air, but would be reduced to dwelling in a thick forest, for ever hidden amongst the foliage of a leafy tree. Day and night he would groan and bewail his unhappy fate. His only food would be the filthy juice of the palm tree, mixed with the saliva of dogs; and he would have to use a human skull as a cup[2].

Brahmins, as a rule, are exempt from all taxes on houses and other personal property. In many districts they pay no customs duty[3]. They are, again, not liable to be impressed into compulsory service, or called upon for those requisitions which fall so heavily on the other inhabitants, who are obliged to labour at public works, such as the making and mending of the high-roads, the repairing of temples, tanks, canals, &c., and who also have to carry provisions for the troops when on the march, or for magistrates and other public servants, more often than not without any payment for their labour, or even sufficient food, and with no compensation for the losses which these requisitions cause them. Such general servants of the public as carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers, and washermen are often obliged, at least in many districts, to work gratuitously for the Brahmins[4].

[1] A kind of exclamation.—DUBOIS.

[2] Here and elsewhere the Abbé applies to Brahmins generally defects which are mostly noticeable in Brahmin priests.—ED.

[3] This, of course, is no longer the case under British rule.—ED.

[4] This, however, is not due to any actual pressure, but to the fact that these public servants enjoy grants of land (*maniams*), and they work gratuitously for the whole village.—ED.

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In countries governed by native princes Brahmins are rarely condemned to any serious corporal punishment; and however heinous their crimes may be, they are never liable to the penalty of death. The murder of a Brahmin, no matter for what reason, would be considered absolutely unpardonable, for it is the greatest of all known crimes and would not fail to bring some terrible calamity to the whole country in which it had been committed.

However, in those countries which are under European or Mahomedan rule, where the sacred character of the Brahmin is held in much less reverence, they are liable like any other native to punishments proportioned to their misdemeanours. Sometimes the Mahomedans beat them to death, unless they pay considerable sums to buy themselves off, a process which suits their persecutors, who are much better pleased to have their money than their blood. But sometimes either from avarice, or because they are afraid that if they once let their oppressors fleece them in this manner they will never be rid of such persecutions until they are despoiled of all that they possess, they prefer to suffer all kinds of torture, even death itself, rather than part with their money. When Brahmins find themselves in this sorry plight there are no lies, no false statements, oaths, and protestations that they will not employ in the hope of extricating themselves. Such conduct can excite no surprise when one remembers that they do not hesitate to teach publicly that lies and perjury, if used to gain personal advantage, are virtuous and meritorious. This convenient doctrine has spread marvellously, for there is not a native of India who would scruple to make use of both, to serve his own ends[1].

[1] No respectable persons (Brahmins included) are known to preach such doctrines nowadays. And the Abbé's assertions are altogether too sweeping.—Ed.

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CHAPTER III

External Defilements.—The care that a Brahmin should take to avoid them.—His Conduct in this respect.—Means of Purification.

ALL that pertains to external and internal defilement, bodily and spiritual, is the very beginning and foundation of a Hindu's education, both religious and civil. They have invented numberless minute and ridiculous precautions to prevent the possibility of coming in contact with anything which, according to their views, would defile their persons, their clothes, their furniture, their temples, &c., &c. It is principally this ineradicable prejudice which has raised such an insurmountable barrier between them and the rest of mankind. Obliged by their religious tenets to hold themselves aloof from every one who does not share their beliefs, they can never, under any circumstances, be on such friendly or confidential terms with any stranger as would arise from feelings of mutual esteem and respect. It is undoubtedly from the Brahmins that the other Hindus have picked up this absurd prejudice, for it is in strongest force amongst them (the Brahmins). The predominating idea in their general conduct, and in their every action in life, is what they call cleanness; and it is the enormous amount of care that they take to keep themselves 'clean,' to prevent any sort or kind of defilement, and to purify themselves from any uncleanness that they may have contracted, which gives them their ascendency over other castes. It is one of the special duties of the *Brahmachari* to be well versed, at an early age, in the customs and practices regulating this important branch of Hindu law.

In all countries the sight of a human corpse produces a thrill of horror. Every one has a strong aversion, amounting almost to repugnance, to touching a dead body. But Hindus consider that the mere fact of assisting at a funeral is sufficient to defile them. When the ceremony is over, they immediately hasten

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to plunge themselves into water, and no one would dare to return home without having thus purified himself. Even the news of the death of a relative, though it may have happened a hundred miles away, produces the same effect, and every member of the family who receives the news must purify himself. Friends and simple acquaintances, however, are not contaminated thereby.

The moment a Hindu has breathed his last the necessary preparations for his funeral begin, for as long as the body remains in the house, neither the inmates, nor even their neighbours, can eat or drink or attend to their usual occupations. I have seen the service in a temple, where a large congregation had assembled, entirely suspended until the body of a man who had died not far off had been removed. Neither incense nor any other perfume would purify a house where a death had taken place. A Brahmin *purohita* must come to remove the impurity with which all the inmates are contaminated. To this end he offers sacrifices, recites *mantrams* suitable to the occasion, and at frequent intervals makes copious libations of holy water [1].

The monthly period, and the after-effects of child-birth, as I have remarked before, render women for the time being unclean [2].

The mother of the newly-born child lives entirely apart for a whole month or more, during which time she may touch neither the vessels nor the furniture of the house, nor any clothes, and still less any person whatsoever. The time of her seclusion being over, she is immersed in a bath, or else a great quantity of water is poured over her head and body. Women

[1] According to the law of Moses, when an Israelite died in a house or in a tent, all the people living therein, and all the furniture it contained, were unclean for seven days (Numbers xix. 14, 15). Any one who touched the body, the bones, or the tomb of a dead man was also unclean for seven days. For purification, the ashes of a red heifer, which had been offered up as a sacrifice by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, were cast into a vessel full of pure water (Numbers xix. 3-6). And an undefiled person, free from all impurity, dipped a bunch of hyssop into this water, and besprinkled the furniture, the room, and the people who were defiled. On the seventh day these latter bathed themselves in water, and washed their clothes, after which they were considered perfectly cleansed.—DUBOIS.

Jewish women were considered unclean under similar circumstances; and the law of Moses gives clear directions as to the manner in which they were to purify themselves.—DUBOIS.

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are similarly isolated during the time of their periodical uncleanness. In all decent houses there is a sort of small gynaeceum set apart for them; but amongst the poor, in whose huts there is no such accommodation, the women are turned into the street, under a sort of shed or outhouse, or else they are allowed a corner of the cowshed.

When the time of uncleanness is passed, all the garments that the woman has worn are given to the washerman. Her clothes are not allowed inside the house; in fact, no one would even dare to look on them[1].

When the washerman brings the clothes back, the Brahmins never fail to put them into water again, inasmuch as the washerman, by the touch of his hand, has defiled them anew. The same thing happens with new cloths which come straight from the unclean hands of a Sudra weaver.

Wives of Lingayats, however, content themselves with rubbing their foreheads with the ashes of cow-dung to purify themselves on similar occasions; and by this simple act, which they call *bhasma snana*, or the bath of ashes, they consider that they are completely purified. In this way a precautionary measure most beneficial to health in this hot country becomes perverted by superstition. On the one hand it is minutely observed by those who do not in the least appreciate its real utility, while it is neglected by others who think it only a pious practice, to be replaced with equal advantage by another.

Earthen vessels, by reason of the material of which they are composed, can never be purified when once they become unclean, and in this they differ from metal ones. Washing will purify the latter, but should the former become defiled, they must be destroyed[2].

As long as earthen vessels are new, and in the hands of the potter, any one, even a Pariah, may handle them with impunity; but from the moment that they have contained water, they can only be used by the person who filled them, or by members of the same caste. Brahmins carry their scruples on this point

[1] The Jews shared the same views on this subject. Isaiah lxiv. 6. Esther xiv. 16.—DUBOIS.

[2] Beds, furniture, clothes, and vessels became, under the Jewish law, unclean by contact with anything that was impure, and often were the means of contaminating other objects (Leviticus xi. 32).—DUBOIS.

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so far as never to allow strangers to enter their kitchens, the doors of which are always kept carefully shut, lest some profane and unclean person should cast an eye on the earthenware inside, which, rendered unclean by that one look, would be only fit to be immediately broken to pieces[1]. It is to avoid the risk of a similar disaster that their women never draw water in earthenware vessels, but always use those made of brass and copper.

It is just the same with their clothes as with their vessels. Some can be defiled, others cannot. Silk, for instance, remains always pure, also cloth made of the fibres of certain plants. For this reason the ancient Brahmin hermits always wore clothes made of either one or the other material. Brahmins at the present day, too, prefer to wear silk, particularly at meals. When a Brahmin doctor wishes to feel the pulse of a sick Sudra, he first wraps up the patient's wrist in a small piece of silk so that he may not be defiled by touching the man's skin[2]. The cotton clothes which are worn by most natives are peculiarly susceptible of defilement. It is quite sufficient to render them unclean if a person of an inferior caste, or, above all, a European or a Pariah, touch them. In the eyes of a Hindu, a Pariah and a European are on the same level. It is impossible to help laughing at the ridiculous care and perpetual pains which an orthodox Brahmin will take to preserve his person and his clothes from contact with anything unclean. But, whatever they may do, it is impossible for them to escape contamination in a populous town. Hence the more scrupulous are obliged to quit the towns and take up their abode in the villages. Others, however, from motives of self-interest, compound with their conscience, and disregard the rules. Exposed as they must be to continual contact with people of all sorts, in the busy haunts where their business takes them, they content themselves with changing their garments on their return home. These are immediately dipped into water, and the uncleanness is removed.

Leather and skins of all kinds, except those of the tiger and

[1] Brahmins and rich Sudras are gradually abandoning the use of earthenware vessels for cooking, and are using vessels of brass and bell-metal. These are even cleaned by Sudras nowadays.—ED.

[2] And so, too, when a Sudra doctor feels the pulse of a Brahmin patient. —ED.

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the antelope, are considered particularly unclean. Caste Hindus must never touch with their hands the slippers or sandals that are worn on the feet. A person riding must always carefully cover with cloth any part of the harness or saddlery that is made of leather. So it is that caste Hindus do not understand how any one can possibly wear anything made, as they say, of the remains of dead animals, such as boots, gloves, or leather breeches, without a feeling of horror and repugnance. The ordinary costume of a European greatly contributes to increase the low opinion that Hindus have formed of the delicacy of our tastes. A scrupulous Brahmin must look very carefully where he puts his feet when walking. He would be defiled and obliged to bathe if by accident his feet should touch a bone, a piece of broken glass or earthenware, a rag, a leaf from which any one had eaten, a bit of skin or leather, hair, or any other unclean thing. The place where he sits must also be chosen with great care. Some penitents always carry with them the 'pure' skin of a tiger or antelope on which to sit; others use a common mat, while the rich have carpets; but any one may sit on the ground without fear of defilement, if the place has been recently rubbed over with cow-dung.

The way in which they take their food is also a matter of some moment. However many guests there may be, it would be considered very rude to speak to any one. They eat in silence, and conversation only begins at the end of the meal, after they have washed their hands and mouths[1]. Nothing must be touched with the left hand, for reasons to be given later on, unless it be the copper vessel which contains water. Hindus drink only once, that is when they have finished eating, and they do so by pouring the liquid into their mouths from a distance. To drink as we do, by putting the glass or cup to the lips, would in their eyes be the height of indecency. While eating great care must be taken that not a fragment falls into the leaf serving as a neighbour's plate. One single grain of rice, one crumb even, would effectually prevent the latter from continuing his meal; or at any rate he would have to take a fresh leaf and another portion of food.

[1] This is not now the case; conversation does go on during meals. Occasionally, however, an individual makes a resolve always to abstain from talking while at meals.—ED.

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No doubt the same cause which makes Hindus of the higher castes so extremely particular about their manner of eating and drinking, accounts for their strong aversion to wind instruments of music. This cause is their insurmountable horror of saliva. They would look on a man who spat upon the floor as quite destitute of good manhers. Spittoons are to be found in every house; but should none be provided and any one require to spit he would have to go outside[1]. However, from a sanitary point of view there is nothing astonishing in this excessive scrupulosity. No properly brought-up European would dream of expectorating on the floor of a room. But with a Hindu it is less from a due regard to cleanliness than from his ever-recurring fear of bodily defilement.

The remains of food are never put aside and kept after a meal, nor are they given to the servants. As has been already stated, to be a servant is no degradation. A servant generally eats with his master, and what he left could not be offered to the poor, unless they were Pariahs, who take anything. Food remnants, in fact, are thrown to the crows and the dogs. Rice that is to be given away to the poor of the same caste, or any other persons with whom it is allowable to eat, is boiled separately. Rice given to other castes is always uncooked; and it is thus that a Brahmin receives it from persons of an inferior caste, who make him a present.

High-caste Hindus, and particularly Brahmins, rarely use plates and dishes at their meals. Sometimes, but only when quite alone in their own houses, they may use a service of copper or other metal; but they are forbidden to use earthenware or china. Usually the rice and other dishes are served on a banana leaf, or on the leaves of some tree neatly sewn together in the form of a plate. To offer a Brahmin food on a metal plate which some one had already used, would be considered a deadly insult. Naturally the use of spoons and forks is also forbidden. Fingers are used instead, and Hindus cannot at all understand how we can use these implements a second time, after having once put them to our mouths, and allowed them to be touched with saliva. If Hindus should happen to eat dry food or fruits between meals, they break off pieces and

[1] Spittoons are not often found in Brahmin houses.—Ed.

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throw them into their mouths, fearing if they put them into their mouths with their fingers the latter might be tainted with saliva[1]. A European once wrote a letter to some friend of his, recommending a Brahmin acquaintance of mine to his notice. When he had finished his letter he sealed it with a wafer, which he moistened by placing it on the tip of his tongue. The Brahmin, who saw him do it, would not take or touch the letter, and left in anger, considering he had been grievously insulted. He preferred to lose any advantage he might have gained from this letter of recommendation, rather than be the bearer of a missive that had been thus defiled.

There are several kinds of animals, especially dogs[2], to touch which would defile a Brahmin. It is very interesting to watch their movements, and the care they will take to avoid the familiar caresses of these faithful companions of man. If, in spite of their efforts, the dog really does touch them, they are obliged to hurry off immediately and plunge, with all their clothes on, into water, and thus remove from both their person and their garments the stain which they had involuntarily acquired by the touch of one of these unclean animals.

There is an infinity of other kinds of exterior defilement to which Brahmins are exposed, but I think what has been already said is sufficient to make known their views on the subject.

It is obvious that so many external defilements necessitate endless ablutions. There are certain rivers and tanks which are held to possess peculiarly cleansing properties, and those Brahmins who live near them are perpetually bathing in their waters, while those who from living at a greater distance are deprived of this advantage, have to content themselves with whatever water or tank is nearest to their dwelling-place. In many places they do not allow Sudras to approach the place where they bathe, either for the purpose of drawing water or to

[1] This practice, like others, becomes mechanical. Hindus never give a thought to them.—ED.

[2] Amongst the many animals looked upon as unclean by Jews, the dog was particularly numbered. But it was only by eating the flesh, or touching the dead carcase of one, that they were defiled. The touch of a living dog did not matter. Furthermore, every commentator of the Holy Scriptures has agreed that these defilements were only figurative of other and far more important uncleannesses, namely, the sins and offences which we commit against God and our neighbour.—DUBOIS.

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make their own ablutions. But they are obliged to be less exclusive in places where they are not supreme.

A Brahmin rarely passes a day without bathing at least once[1], while those who wish to call public attention to their minute observance of religious customs must bathe three times a day.

It is a common practice amongst natives to anoint themselves occasionally from head to foot with either oil of sesamum or sometimes castor oil. They remove the dirt which results from it by rubbing it off with certain herbs. They then have hot water poured over their bodies, and finally bathe in cold water. At their grand ceremonials Brahmins are in the habit of offering some such oily mixture to all their guests, who rub themselves over from head to foot with it, and then plunge into a bath. Dead bodies are similarly anointed before being conveyed to the funeral pile or burying ground; and this office is always performed by the nearest relatives.

[1] One bath every day is compulsory, and is invariably taken.—Ed.

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CHAPTER IV

Internal Defilements.—Abstinence from all Intoxicating Liquors, and from everything that has had Life.—Particular Horror of the Brahmins for the Flesh of the Cow.—Their abhorrence of Europeans who eat it as Food.

Besides those external defilements which only affect the outer skin, there are others which Brahmins and other Hindus say insinuate themselves into the body, and which can only be got rid of by proper methods ordained by rule and custom. There is no doubt that it was for the sake of health and cleanliness, in the first instance, that Hindu lawgivers inculcated these principles of defilement and purification. The heat of the Indian climate, the profuse perspiration which is the natural result, and the diseases which are endemic in consequence of it, all help to impoverish the blood of the inhabitants; and from these causes doubtless originated those obligatory precautions which have since been strengthened by custom and superstition, and which are considered to be best calculated to counteract these deadly influences. If the salutary rules at first prescribed have in the course of ages become perverted into the present childish and puerile ceremonial, which common sense rejects, the fault must be attributed partly to popular superstition which exaggerates and distorts everything, partly to popular ignorance, and partly to the cunning and avarice of the hypocritical charlatans who mislead the people.

Water may be said to be a Brahmin's sole beverage. In order that it may be pure and may not defile the person who drinks it, it is indispensable that it should be drawn and carried by a member of his own caste; to drink water drawn by strange hands would be a great sin, the remission of which could only be obtained at the cost of elaborate and expensive ceremonies. In some places Brahmins and Sudras fetch their water from the same place, but if by chance the water-pot of the latter should

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touch that of the former, the Brahmin immediately breaks his, if it is made of earthenware, or, if of brass or copper, gives it a thorough scouring with sand and water. In those parts of the country which are under the rule of native princes, Brahmins forbid any one of another caste to approach their wells; but where Mahomedans are in power, and more particularly in the large towns under European rule, it is not unusual to see Brahmins, Sudras, and even Pariahs, all drawing water from the same source. But all the same, I once witnessed on the coast a violent disturbance caused by the inconceivable effrontery of a Pariah woman who had dared to draw water from the common well.

Curdled milk diluted with water is a very favourite drink with Hindus. It is usually Sudras who prepare and sell this refreshing beverage. Although, generally speaking, there is more water than milk in the mixture, Brahmins have no scruples in partaking of it, and if any one reproaches them with thus using water drawn and handled by Sudras, they reply that the curdled milk, which has come from the body of a cow, cleanses it from all impurities.

On the other hand, they have an invincible repugnance to the liquor which is obtained by tapping cocoanut and other palms and several other trees of the country. This juice is sweet and refreshing if drunk before it has begun to ferment, but if taken in excess it is intoxicating. A spirit called arrack is distilled from it, and for this also there is the same repugnance. As a rule, a respectable Hindu will not touch spirits or any intoxicating drink, considering that they cause one of the greatest internal defilements that it is possible to contract. In consequence of this praiseworthy opinion drunkenness is looked upon as a degrading and infamous vice, and any one would be promptly and ignominiously expelled from his caste were he found guilty of giving way to it It is only Pariahs and men of the lowest classes who dare publicly to consume intoxicating drinks. Nevertheless, one does see occasionally in European settlements and in the large towns high-caste natives, and even Brahmins, breaking the law of temperance; but it is only in strict privacy, and after every precaution has been taken to conceal the unpardonable weakness.

The air one breathes may also be the means of internal defile-

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ment; for instance, it would mean defilement if the olfactory nerves of a Brahmin became sensible of the smoke arising from a funeral pyre where a body was being burned, or from the fire on a Pariah's hearth where food was being cooked.

In certain parts of the country, if Pariahs perceive that a Brahmin is coming their way, they make a long *détour*, in fear lest the effluvia which is given off by their unclean persons should defile the exterior and interior of this noble personage. When Sudras speak to a Brahmin etiquette obliges them to keep at a respectful distance, or at least that they should put the right hand before their mouths, so that the taint of their poisonous breath may not reach him. It were very desirable, for the peace and honour of Sudra husbands, that this excessive delicacy extended also to their wives; but Brahmins are far from feeling the same superb disdain towards them. As for the wives of Pariahs, the feeling of antipathy for everything connected with this class is so strong, and the defilement which results from even an innocent and accidental touch is so difficult to remove, that one very rarely hears of a Brahmin who has been so blinded by passion as to have had any intercourse with a woman of this class.

It is with regard to their food that Brahmins take the most excessive precautions. They are never allowed to touch meat, and this excludes not only anything that has had life, fish included, but also anything that has contained a germ of life, such as eggs of all sorts. Vegetables, which form their principal food, are also subject to numerous exceptions. Thus they reject any vegetable whose root or stem grows in the shape of a head, such as onions, garlic, mushrooms, &c. Is it because they have discovered some hurtful properties in these plants? I think not. The greater number of such vegetables are, on the contrary, considered by other people to possess, in that very hot climate, antiseptic and health-giving qualities.

I have often tried to find out the reason why these vegetables are avoided, but I have never been able to extract any other answer from those I have questioned than that it was the custom and rule to avoid them [1].

To adhere strictly to all these rules of abstinence is what

[1] Whatever the motive may be, there are no doubt some superstitions attached to it. Every one knows the extreme veneration in which the Egyp-

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is called eating properly. Whoever eats of forbidden things cannot, according to Brahminical doctrine, keep his body really pure. However, I am quite satisfied by experience that there are some who occasionally relax the severity of these rules; but the extreme care which is taken to conceal the fact proves what a strong hold the rules have over the greater number.

These strict rules of abstinence are observed by all the respectable people of this large Hindu nation; they are most scrupulously obeyed in the family circle, without any one daring to think of violating them, even under the most pressing necessity. They appear to have existed from the time when the natives of India were formed into one nation, that is to say, at no very distant date from the Flood, and it seems to me they show a strong indication of the great antiquity of this people.

And this law of abstinence, far from losing force and falling into abeyance, has gained many additional adherents from among the better class of Sudras. Its minute observance is the surest way of gaining respect even amongst those who do not feel called upon to impose similar privations upon themselves. Only Sudras of the very lowest class eat meat openly; and many of these do not venture to cook it in their own houses, but in a secluded corner of their cowsheds. To ask a Hindu if he eats meat, even when it is a well-known fact that he does so, is to insult him deeply; while to offer meat at a meal to a guest with whom one is not intimate, would be the height of rudeness. Hindus who eat meat do so only in the privacy of their own families or in company with near relatives or intimate friends. Even the common Sudras do not offer meat at their festive gatherings such as wedding feasts. Were they to do so their guests would consider themselves insulted, and would leave immediately.

The Lingayats, or votaries of Siva, are strict abstainers from anything that has possessed the principle of life. But the careful manner in which they thereby try to maintain perfect internal purity does not profit them much, as they are credited

tians held onions and other vegetables of the same family. They even swore by the leeks and onions in their gardens. Juvenal (*Satires*, xv) laughs at them about it:

'Porrum et cepe nefas violare, et frangere morsu,
O sanctas gentes quibus haec nascuntur in hortis
Numina!'—DUBOIS.

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at the same time with neglecting some of the precautions necessary to preserve their external purity. They are blamed, for instance, for allowing their women to come and go about the house during the time of their periodical uncleanness, and for not insisting on purifying ablutions afterwards; the same also during and after confinements. In fact, they neglect a great many cleanly customs which, putting superstition aside, are most beneficial to health in hot climates.

People who abstain entirely from animal food acquire such an acute sense of smell that they can perceive in a moment from a person's breath, or from the exudation of the skin, whether that person has eaten meat or not; and that even after a lapse of twenty-four hours.

In some parts there is a peculiar custom which allows men to eat meat, but strictly forbids it to women.

To eat the flesh of the cow is an ineffaceable defilement. The bare idea of tasting it would be abhorrent to any devout Hindu. This invincible repugnance, based as it is now solely on the superstition which places the cow among the principal Hindu deities, had most probably at first a much more sensible but not less forcible motive, namely self-interest. The Hindu lawgivers recognized, of course, that these animals, so useful to man in all places and under all circumstances, were particularly valuable in a country where there is no other beast available for tilling or for transporting agricultural and commercial products. Besides which, the milk was an indispensable addition to the food of the multitude of poor natives who would otherwise have no other food than insipid vegetables.

Perhaps we may also add another motive besides that of preserving the species of these valuable animals, and that is the indigestible nature of beef. Indeed, in a climate where the organs of the stomach are so much weakened by excessive perspiration, the habitual use of heavy food would have soon destroyed the health of the people. I have known many Europeans who entirely left off eating meat for this reason, because they found that they could not eat it without suffering afterwards from indigestion [1].

[1] Montesquieu says: 'There are many local laws peculiar to different religious beliefs. The tenet of metempsychosis is peculiarly suited to the Indian climate. The excessive heat burns up all the pasture, and

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At the same time the Hindu lawgivers knew the character of their compatriots too well to imagine that simple prohibitions and punishments would suffice to save the lives of these precious animals. So, calling religion to their aid, they deified them. To kill a cow—according to the principles of Hindu law—is not only a crime, but an awful sacrilege, a deicide, which can only be expiated by the death of the offender; while to eat of the flesh of a cow is a defilement which cannot be purified. Pariahs, however, are tacitly allowed to feast on the flesh of those animals which die of old age or disease. In their case this is not looked upon exactly as a crime; but, as we have already seen, this privilege, of which these miserable outcasts avail themselves without scruple, contributes a good deal towards keeping up that sort of curse which overshadows them.

The flesh of the buffalo, camel, horse, elephant, &c., in fact everything that comes under the head of large meat, inspires all Hindus, Pariahs excepted, with almost as great an abhorrence as the flesh of the cow or ox. There is the same idea of defilement connected with it.

I have already pointed out that Europeans do not seem disposed to adopt the same rules of abstinence as are followed by the people among whom they live, and that, without paying any attention to the disgust which they cause, they continue to eat beef openly. It is certain that this conduct estranges them from all the better classes of Hindus, who, consequently, in this respect place them far below the Pariahs. It is true that the first

there is little left with which to feed the cattle. There is always a danger of there being too few beasts to till the ground. Cattle multiply but slowly in that country, and are subject to many diseases. Hence it is that a religious law which protects them is very necessary from an economical point of view. But while the pastures are all burnt up, rice and vegetables grow very well by the help of irrigation. Thus a religious law which only allows of this kind of food is useful to the people of the country Furthermore, while meat is usually tasteless in hot climates, milk and butter, which are obtained from these animals, form the chief items of food. The law forbidding cows to be killed and eaten as food is therefore not without reason in India' (*Esprit des Lois*, book xxiv. ch. 24).—DUBOIS.

Sir M. Monier-Williams in his book on Hinduism says in a foot-note: 'Happily for the Hindus, the cow which supplies them with their only animal food—milk and butter—and the ox which helps to till their ground, were declared sacred at an early period. Had it not been so, this useful animal might have been exterminated in times of famine. What is now a superstition had its origin, like some other superstitions, in a wise forethought.'—ED.

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conquerors of India, in defiance of the most sacred and long-established customs of the country, killed oxen and cows without exciting a general insurrection against such an insult as the slaughter of animals worshipped by Hindus as their gods; and it is also true that for several succeeding centuries the handful of foreigners established among them have been allowed to kill these sacred animals with impunity to satisfy their own appetites; but they have only to thank the mild, temperate, and indolent character of the nation which has spared them [1].

Amongst ancient nations there are few who would with so much patience have allowed their religious beliefs to be openly set at naught. The Israelites, when in captivity in Egypt, begged for permission from Pharaoh to make a pilgrimage into the desert, there to sacrifice to God without fear of interruption, because they would have been liable to be all massacred or stoned had they dared to perform such sacrifices in the sight of the idolatrous Egyptians, who worshipped as gods some of the very animals that they required for their sacrifices [2].

Cambyses made himself more execrable in the eyes of the Egyptians by killing the ox Apis, than by all the cruelties and acts of tyranny of which he was guilty in dealing with this peaceable people [3].

The Egyptians considered that to kill, even by accident, one of their sacred animals was the most heinous of crimes. Whoever was guilty of such an act was invariably put to death. A Roman soldier was torn in pieces by the populace, in spite of the terror that the name of Rome inspired, for having by

[1] This horror of cow-killing is as strong among Hindus throughout India to-day as it ever was. The remarkable revival of Hinduism during the last few years has been characterized by the formation of innumerable secret religious societies for the protection of the cow, and the riots among Hindus and Mahomedans in recent years are more or less directly traceable, it is asserted, to the propaganda of these societies. It may be mentioned that in Kashmir, until quite recently, cow killing was punishable with death, and imprisonment for life is now the penalty.—ED.

[2] Exodus viii. 26.

[3] 'Did Cambyses do well,' asks Voltaire, 'when after conquering Egypt he killed the ox Apis with his own hand? Why not? He showed the idiots that their gods could be brought to the pit without nature rising in her wrath to avenge the sacrilege!' This is Voltaire's smart criticism, but I think few wise statesmen or sensible persons would share his opinion.—DUBOIS.

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mischance killed a cat. Diodorus, who records this incident, also mentions that during a famine the Egyptians preferred to devour each other rather than touch the animals they held sacred.

The Hindus would also carry their scruples to the same point. In whatever straits they might be they would prefer to die rather than save their lives by killing cattle. From this we may conclude that, though they daily witness the slaughter of these sacred animals by Europeans, without uttering any loud complaint, they are far from being insensible to the insult. But restrained by the fear which these foreigners have always inspired in them, they content themselves with complaining in secret and storing up in their hearts all the indignation that they feel. Pious Lingayats have often come to me, imagining that my title of European priest gave me great influence over my fellow-countrymen, to implore me, in earnest terms, and often with tears in their eyes, to do everything in my power to put a stop to this sacrilege. In States which are still ruled by heathen princes on no pretext whatever is it permitted to kill a cow. In fact, this act of sacrilege, so hateful to Hindus, is only permitted in provinces where Europeans or Mahomedans hold sway.

To purify the body from any interior defilement that may have been contracted there is no more efficacious way than by the performance of the *pancha-gavia*.

As to other ordinary defilements, from which one can never quite escape, they may be removed in several ways, which I shall speak of in the next chapter. If these ceremonies can purify the soul from sin, so much the more will they be capable of purifying the body from all uncleanness, both external and internal.

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CHAPTER V

Defilements of the Soul, and the Means of Purification.—Places of Purification.—Sins for which there is no Forgiveness.—Conjectures on the Origin of Brahmin Customs connected with Defilement and Purification.—Defilement by Europeans, and an Incident which happened to the Author from this Cause.

THE doctrine is laid down in Hindu books, is endorsed by the philosophers of the country, and is admitted also sometimes by Brahmins, that the only real defilement of the soul proceeds from sin, which is caused by perversity of the will. One Hindu poet, Vemana, expresses himself thus on this subject:—'It is water which causes mud, and it is water which removes it. It is your will that makes you commit sin, and it is by your will alone that you can be purified[1].' This doctrine, though imperfectly carried out in practice, certainly proves that Hindus acknowledge that it is only by an effort of the will and by a renunciation of sin that pardon and purification of the soul can be obtained.

But this enlightenment, which reason will never allow to be entirely extinguished even in the midst of the deep shadows of gross idolatry, has become, if not extinguished, at any rate entirely obscured by the religious formularization to which the Brahmins have become slaves. The Brahmins have allowed themselves to believe that without either the wish or the intention of renouncing evil it is possible for the soul to be purified by various means, which, through the extreme facility with which they can be employed, can only tend to lessen the real abhorrence of sin and give a false sense of security to the sinner. The *pancha-gavia*, for example, is sufficient to obtain the remission of any sin whatever, even when the sin has been committed deliberately; and that is really why the use

[1] This is not to be found among the verses of Vemana, but any Telugu verse of which the author is unknown is ascribed to him.—POPE.

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of such a disgusting liquid (the urine of the cow) is so strongly upheld. Looking as they do upon sin as a material or bodily defilement, it is not surprising that they consider mere ablutions of the body sufficient to wipe it out. Ablutions performed in certain sacred rivers, such as the Ganges, the Indus, the Gódávari, the Cauvery, and others, purify both soul and body from any defilements they may ever have contracted. It is even possible for a person living at a distance to obtain the advantages conferred by their cleansing waters without leaving his house; he has only to transport himself thither *in intention*, and to think of the place while bathing.

There are several celebrated streams and tanks in India credited with the same purifying virtue; but some of them only possess this virtue at intervals more or less frequent. Thus the waters of the famous tank of Combaconum, in Tanjore, are only endowed with cleansing properties once in twelve years; while those of the spring which rises in the hill Tirutanimalai, in the Carnatic, are efficacious every three years. There are few provinces in India which do not possess sacred tanks. When the year and the day arrive for people to bathe in these sanctifying waters, a pilgrimage is made to the spot by enormous crowds of devotees, who have been warned beforehand by messengers sent in all directions by the Brahmins, who are interested in keeping up this holy fervour. On the appointed day they all stand round the tank, awaiting the propitious moment to plunge into it. Directly the *purohita* gives the signal, all present, men and women, rush into the water, shouting and screaming, and making an indescribable uproar. They soon find themselves heaped one on top of the other, so that they can hardly move. It almost always happens that in the midst of this frightful confusion several are drowned or suffocated, and many come out with broken or dislocated limbs[1]. Happy are those accounted who lose their lives on such an occasion! Their fate is more to be envied than lamented; for these victims of religious ardour go straight to the realms of bliss.

[1] This is the *Maha-makham* festival. A benevolent Government now takes the precaution of reducing the depth of the water to a few inches, to prevent such disasters. The festival was celebrated this year (1897) on Feb. 17, when 500,000 people were present.—ED.

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The time of an eclipse is also considered a particularly opportune moment for purifying oneself from sin. Bathing at that time, wherever it may be possible, but especially in the sea, possesses the merit of cleansing the soul from all defilements. To bathe during the solstices or equinoxes, at the time of a new or of a full moon, or on the eleventh day of the moon, is also considered efficacious. The mouth of a river, the point where it joins another, or where in its windings its course runs from east to west, are also peculiarly propitious.

To read the Puranas and other sacred writings, to make pilgrimages to certain temples and holy places called *punyasthala*, to climb to the top of certain very high mountains, and even simply to gaze at them: all these procure the forgiveness of sins. There is one of these holy mountains in the Carnatic, in the district of Coimbatore. It is called *Nilagiri-malai*, and is believed to be the highest in the province[1]. For this reason alone the Hindus have made it a *punyasthala*, or place of virtue, their custom being to deify everything extraordinary in nature. As it is very difficult to reach the top of this mountain, a view of the summit alone (and it is visible a long way off) is considered sufficient to remove the burden of sin from the conscience of any person who looks at it; provided that he looks at it with that intention.

In connecting religious sentiment with everything which has any distinctive peculiarity or grandeur, they have not forgotten to include the magnificent waterfalls which surprise and charm the eye. Thus the Cauvery Falls, and several others, are supposed to be pre-eminently suitable for ablutions. In a word, one everywhere comes across places consecrated by superstition, where the greatest sinners can, with the most perfect ease, extinguish in a limpid and accommodating stream the burning fires of remorse by which they may be troubled.

To recite *mantrams*; to exercise the happy privilege of looking at the great ones of the earth, especially *gurus*; to think of Vishnu and the other principal deities: these are all most efficacious in purifying the soul. A Brahmin who happened to go three times round a temple of Siva merely in pursuit of a dog that he was beating to death, obtained the remission

[1] The Nilgiris, or Blue Mountains—now a sanitarium, the summer headquarters of the Madras Government. —ED.

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of all his sins, and also the special favour of being transported immediately to Kailasa[1].

Admittance into Vaikuntha[2] was once granted to a great sinner simply for having pronounced, even in blasphemy, the name of Narayana and the name of Vishnu. All this is vouched for in the sacred Hindu books.

There are, however, some sins so heinous, according to Hindu ideas, that they cannot be expiated by any of the means before mentioned. These unpardonable sins are five in number:—

1. *Brahmahattya*, the murder of a Brahmin.
2. *Sisuhattya*, the destruction of an unborn child, i. e. wilfully causing an abortion.
3. *Surapana*, to drink toddy, the juice of the palm-tree.
4. *Swarna-Sneya*, to steal gold.
5. *Guru-talpa-gamana*, to have sexual intercourse with the wife of one's *guru* or of one's spiritual or temporal superior.

Some add a sixth, which consists in holding communication with any one guilty of any of these five sins, commonly called *pancha-patakas*, the five crimes. These fearful crimes cannot be wiped out in the lifetime of the offenders by any of the usual means employed for the purification of the soul. Those who are guilty of them expiate them after death, by one or more transmigrations of the soul into some vile animal, or by the torments of *Naraka*, i. e. hell.

Besides the sins committed during his present existence, from which a Brahmin must be constantly purifying himself, he must also think of expiating those committed in a former state. To become a Brahmin by reincarnation is the happiest destiny possible for a human being. It is a reward which is only granted for the accumulated merits of many successive generations. Yet the fact of the reincarnation is in itself a proof that there still remains in that person some fault to be expiated: otherwise the soul would have been transported to the Sattya-loka, or paradise of Brahma, and thereby would have been spared the trouble of animating another mortal body here below. Actual good deeds, such as giving alms to Brahmins, constructing wells or tanks, building temples, or contributing to the cost of religious services, and various other works of charity, are

[1] The paradise of Siva.

[2] The paradise of Vishnu.

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held to add considerably to the efficacy of the various methods of purification which we have just spoken of, when performed in conjunction with them.

I will say nothing here of the many hindrances to the perfect purification of the soul caused by a man's wife or children, by his worldly possessions, by his caste, and by his passions. They will be referred to elsewhere.

Defilements and purifications form together one of the most important articles in Brahmin doctrine and the Hindu creed. The practices and opinions with regard to these subjects are so extraordinary and so unique that it would be most interesting to thoroughly investigate the motives which originally gave rise to them; but, either from prudence or from ignorance on their part, I have never been able to gather from Hindus any authentic information about them. Everything that I have been able to ascertain has been founded more or less on conjecture. But I have often had occasion to remark, that, after allowing for exaggeration, many Hindu rites bear a strong resemblance to those practised by other nations in bygone ages. Thus Jacob at Bethel, when preparing to offer up a sacrifice, commanded his household to purify themselves, and to change their garments [1]. When the Israelites were warned that God would appear to them in the desert of Sinai, God commanded them by Moses to wash their clothes, and not to touch their wives for three days beforehand [2]. Many passages in the Hindu sacred writings recall the rules which the law of Moses laid down for the children of Israel concerning the various kinds of defilements, real and technical [3].

It is, in fact, impossible to deny that there are many striking points of resemblance between Jewish and Hindu customs. Should one then conclude that the latter copied them from the former? I think not. If they are alike in some essentials, they display great dissimilarity in their outward forms. Besides, there is nothing that I know of in the history either of the Egyptians or of the Jews to show that these people existed as a nation prior to the Hindus. The peculiarity of the dogmas and rites of the Hindu religion, the strong antipathy which the Hindus feel for anything that savours of imitation, the

[1] Genesis xxxv. 2. [2] Exodus xix. 10, 14.

[3] Leviticus xv. 11–15.

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unshaken firmness with which they cling to ideas which originated at a date now lost in the darkness of antiquity, the intolerance, the pride, the presumption of the Brahmins, and above all their detestation and contempt for foreigners and foreign customs: all these make me confident that the Hindus never borrowed anything from other nations. Everything connected with the Hindus is stamped with the impress of originality and independence. Never could this vain and self-sufficient people, who are so filled with the idea of their own moral ascendency, have condescended to model their habits and customs on those of foreigners, whom they have always kept at the greatest possible distance. How, then, came the Hindus to originate these singular notions of defilement and purification? I feel that I possess neither the necessary learning nor the necessary talent to cope satisfactorily with this difficult question. I must therefore beg my readers' indulgence in briefly laying before them the conjectural opinions which I have formed on the subject.

Even before the Flood men were imbued with these notions of defilement and purification. Amongst animals there were the clean and the unclean. God recognized this distinction when He dictated to Noah the number of each species that was to go into the ark [1].

It is probable that the tradition of this classification of things clean and unclean was handed down by the descendants of the men who escaped the Flood. When they began to eat animal food, and noticed that the flesh of some beasts was not as wholesome or palatable as that of others, their opinions with regard to this tradition were strengthened; and, beginning by giving up what they found was deleterious to their health, they finally persuaded themselves that they could not even touch the unclean thing without being defiled.

These ideas about defilement were common to several other ancient nations. They, like the Hindus, had recourse to water and fire as means of purification. They also had their sacred rivers. At the time when the Hindus began to regard the waters of the Ganges, the Indus, and Gódávari as peculiarly sacred, and to attribute to them those cleansing properties which could purify both soul and body, the inhabitants of

[1] Genesis vii. 2.

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Colchis and other peoples living near the Phasis credited the waters of that river with the same virtues, while those of the Nile were considered equally efficacious amongst the Egyptians.

Cleanliness is a most important factor in preserving public health. The luxury of clothes in those primitive times was reduced to just what was necessary to cover the body, or to protect it from atmospheric changes; and garments were rarely changed. The habits of the people therefore naturally tended to counteract the unhealthy consequences which would ensue from their prolonged use, by the frequent washing of these garments in pure water.

Everything in nature had deteriorated after the Flood. There were many more diseases, and in searching for the causes of them people thought that the unwholesome nature of certain kinds of food might be partly answerable for it. Therefore the use of such food was forbidden. They also realized that some of these diseases were contagious; therefore the persons who were attacked by them were isolated. The science of medicine was at that time in its infancy, but it was soon seen that the greater number of these maladies were caused by the unhealthy condition or poverty of the blood, owing to excessive perspiration; and the salutary effects of a bath being fully recognized, a bath was finally considered as a sovereign remedy for all complaints.

Men were at length obliged to disperse in different directions, and gradually peopled the various countries of the globe. India, being close to the plains of Sennaar and enjoying a good climate and a fertile soil, was doubtless one of the first countries thus inhabited. The very high temperature made those in authority feel that here, even more than in the country they had left, the rules of abstinence from certain meats, and attention to personal cleanliness, must be strictly enforced under pain of severe punishments.

In all probability, therefore, these Hindu notions about defilement and purification originated at some date anterior to the Flood, and after being handed down from generation to generation, undergoing various alterations and modifications either from superstition, the whim of some important person, or from motives of expediency to suit purely local conditions, they at

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length crystallized themselves into their present form, and still continue to have the strongest hold on the people.

Though the Hindus are fairly tolerant so far as the actual dogmas of their religion are concerned, they do not allow the smallest divergence of opinion on the subject referred to in the present chapter. If Europeans living in India, simply for the good of their health, would or could condescend so far as to make their mode of life conform to that of the higher classes of natives, at any rate in all essential matters, how much more cordial and friendly the relations between the two peoples would be! When I was travelling in districts where Europeans were as yet but little known I generally met with an agreeable welcome. Indeed, sometimes I was received with the most generous hospitality. Brahmins themselves have not disdained to offer me shelter in their own houses on seeing my long beard and my native costume[1]. I must own, however, that my attendants took care that people should be favourably disposed towards me by publishing abroad that though I was a European priest, a Feringhi *guru*, I was also the priest of all those castes of natives who had embraced the religion of Sarveswara[2], that I adhered strictly to all the Brahmin rules, made frequent ablutions, just as they did, abstained from meat and all intoxicating drinks, &c., &c.

These last assertions were pure falsehoods, which, on my honour, I had never sanctioned; but all the same they were made and repeated unknown to me, whenever my followers thought it to their interest or mine. Nevertheless, in spite of the greatest attention and circumspection on my part to avoid giving offence to my hosts, I occasionally found myself involved in a difficulty without its being in the least my fault. Here is a curious case in point. Travelling in South Mysore, I arrived one evening

[1] The influence thus acquired by the Abbé is testified to by Colonel Wilks, thus: 'Of the respect which his irreproachable conduct inspires, it may be sufficient to state that when travelling, on his approach to a village the house of a Brahmin is uniformly cleared for his reception without interference, and generally without communication to the officers of government, as a spontaneous mark of deference and respect.'—ED.

[2] A word which Native Christians employ to express God. It means literally, 'the Ruler of all things' (the Lord of all). Protestant missionaries have objected to the use of the word, because it is one of the titles of the god Siva.—DUBOIS.

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at a village where I was obliged to pass the night. As there was no public lodging in the place, my people asked the village headman to provide some shelter. The headman was a Brahmin, and at first made some difficulties; but to gain his help my people told the usual falsehoods about myself. The Brahmin, before making any promise, came to the place where I was waiting, and after gazing at me from head to foot silently and attentively, asked me simply if I was accompanied by any Pariahs or dogs (for these both occupied the same level in his opinion). I told him that I allowed neither Pariahs nor dogs near me, and that all my followers were men of good caste. After a few moments' reflection, during which he fixed his eyes with evident predilection on my beard and my native costume, he said to me: 'You are a European, but out of respect for your dignity as *guru*, and in consideration of what your people tell me with regard to your strict conformity to the customs of the country, I will give you lodging in my own house. Take off your shoes and follow me.' I entered his house with my followers, and installed myself in a tidy part of the house which he assigned to me. Shortly afterwards my host, hearing me cough, ran to me in great haste, and with a very serious air expressed the hope that I would not defile the house by spitting in it. I did my best to calm his fears, assuring him that he had no reason to fear my transgressing any of the strict rules of Hindu custom. Despite my assurances, however, I noticed that he charged one of his sons to keep watch over me. Another spy was charged with observing the conduct of my servants. At sundown one of these latter left the village to answer a call of nature. Hardly had he returned when the person watching my servants, having seen him in the distance, ran to tell his master that his house had been polluted, that he had admitted into it people of low habits, for had he not seen with his own eyes one of my servants return from answering a call of nature without having washed himself and enter the house in this horrible state of defilement? On this my host rose in great wrath, and with gestures and looks of anger repeated to me what he had been told, ending by exclaiming: 'Is any sin equal to this! Behold the kind of gratitude which I ought to have foreseen in offering you hospitality. I had a presentiment that my good-nature would bring me trouble. To do such a thing without washing

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afterwards! What a crime! What a scandal! What an infamy! What shame for my house! . . . You must punish severely the low person who has so horribly defiled my house. You shall pay me all the cost of purification! And depart, quit my house at once!'

I let him vent his choler without interrupting him, and when he had ceased I answered him calmly that, if his complaints were well founded, reparation should be made him. But first of all he must prove that the offence had really been committed. My servant denied it strenuously, and indignantly demanded on his own part that his accuser should be punished. He had, he asserted, simply stooped down to answer a call of nature different from that alleged. His accuser nevertheless stuck to his assertion with horrible oaths. The Brahmin, believing him rather than my servant, insisted on my leaving the house. Thereupon, in a firm tone, I declared that I would neither punish my servant nor pay compensation for an injury which had not been proved. As to the order which he had given that I should leave his house, it was, I told him, an unreasonable violation of the laws of hospitality. I was ready to obey it, seeing that he was master of his own house, but he was also headman of the village, and he was therefore bound to find me another lodging for the night.

The Brahmin went out repeating his complaints for the hundredth time. Shortly afterwards he returned with a number of the villagers, who were even louder than himself in their protestations. They demanded that my servant should be delivered up to them for severe punishment, and that I should pay compensation, repeatedly exclaiming: 'What shame! What wickedness! What abomination!'

My servant, fearing the consequences that might ensue, racked his brains for some way of proving his innocence. At last he found one which would have been conclusive before less prejudiced judges. 'If I am guilty of what you say,' he exclaimed, 'let two of you come away with me and examine my person.' The Brahmin, anxious to prove him guilty, refused on unreasonable grounds to sanction such an unanswerable argument. Finally, after a long and useless discussion, we decided to adjourn the dispute until the morning. I left the Brahmin's house, and went and lodged, together with my people,

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in a cowshed outside the village, in which I was allowed as a great favour to pass the night. My people, even more alarmed than myself, left the cowshed to see what was happening in the village, and came and reported to me that a great disturbance was taking place: that everybody was talking about the incident; that everywhere punishment and compensation were demanded, and that if we stayed there until the morning my servant would run the risk of being severely beaten. To save myself such a vexation I was quite ready to sacrifice a few rupees, though I would never have consented to have my poor servant exposed to maltreatment for such an offence, whether guilty or not. Consequently I thought the most prudent thing to do was to flee. At one o'clock at night, when the cowherd was sleeping peacefully in a corner of the shed, we left quietly. I mounted my horse and we decamped in all haste. Before sunrise we had passed the borders of the district where this unfortunate occurrence took place, and were therefore out of danger.

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CHAPTER VI

Marriage amongst Brahmins and other Hindus.—Celibacy.—Those who may remain unmarried.—Polygamy toleratod only amongst the Upper Classes.—The two Sexes nearly equal in numbers.—Indissolubility of the Marriage Tie.—How Marriages are arranged.—Preparatory Ceremonies.—Solemn Ceremonies for the first and following Days.—Marriage amongst Sudras.—Marriage amongst Kshatriyas.—Duties after Marriage.

To a Hindu marriage is the most important and most engrossing event of his life; it is a subject of endless conversation and of the most prolonged preparations. An unmarried man is looked upon as having no social status and as being an almost useless member of society. He is not consulted on any important subject, and no work of any consequence may be given to him. A Hindu who becomes a widower finds himself in almost the same position as a bachelor, and speedily remarries.

Though marriage is considered the natural state for the generality of men, those who from pious motives remain unmarried are looked up to and treated with the utmost respect. But it is only those persons who have renounced the world, and have chosen to lead a life of contemplation, who can take vows of celibacy. In any other case marriage is the rule, and every one is under the obligation of discharging *the great debt to his ancestors*, namely, that of begetting a son[1]. No doubt it will be asked whether the Hindu devotees who take vows of celibacy do really remain as chaste as they are supposed to be. I should say without hesitation, No. Many have concubines under various pretexts, and many give themselves up in secret to vices which would disgust the most shameless libertine. Amongst this latter class are the greater number of the *gurus* and *sannyasis*, who wander about the country and live on the credulity of the public. Others shut themselves up in seclusion

[1] The Sanskrit word for son, *putra*, means literally, 'one who saves from *put* or hell'—the hell into which parents without sons fall.—Ed.

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and lead idle and easy-going lives, their sole occupation being to receive the abundant offerings flowing in from the ignorant and foolish who believe in the false reputation for holiness which such people have acquired. But persons of sense are not taken in by their hypocrisy, and it is fairly notorious that these knaves, in the seclusion of their retreats, give themselves up to the grossest immoralities.

It must not be supposed, however, that I am accusing all unmarried Hindus without exception of leading dissolute lives. On the contrary, I have been credibly informed by those whose word may be relied on, and who know what they are talking about, that some few may be found who deny themselves all intercourse with women; but, on the other hand, one is led to believe that they allow themselves other infamous pleasures of such an abominable character that delicacy forbids one to accept the accusation except under strong proof; so I prefer to think that there are a few unmarried Hindus who are able to resist all sensual pleasures.

And why, after all, should one refuse to believe that some of these *sannyasis* or penitents are able to exercise such self-control, however difficult it may be to subdue one's passions in a country where the warm climate and the corrupt state of morality continually serve to arouse them ? Do not these men, either from ostentation or from fanaticism, subject their bodies to the most cruel ordeals? And the harsh, self-inflicted *tapasas*, or penances, do they not prove, as far as one can see, their wish and intention to subdue their sinful lusts? All the same, in spite of their hypocritical affectations of piety, the greater number of these *sannyasis* are looked upon as utter impostors, and that by the most enlightened of their fellow-countrymen.

But this privilege which men possess of remaining single, and giving themselves up to a life of contemplation, is not shared by women. They at all events cannot, under any circumstances, take vows of celibacy. Subjected on all sides to the moral

[1] Montesquieu says that our natural human tendency is to prefer in the cause of religion anything that presupposes effort. So in the matter of morality, we incline theoretically to anything that bears the impress of asceticism. Celibacy, for instance, has taken the greatest hold on those to whom it seems most unsuited, and on whom it might have the most disastrous results (*Esprit des Lois*, xxv. 4).

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ascendency of man, the very idea that they could possibly place themselves in a state of independence and out of men's power is not allowed to cross their minds. The opinion is firmly established throughout the whole of India, that women were only created for the propagation of the species, and to satisfy men's desires. All women therefore are obliged to marry, and marriages are carefully arranged before they arrive at a marriageable age. If by that time they have not found a husband, they very rarely keep their innocence much longer. Experience has taught that young Hindu women do not possess sufficient firmness, and sufficient regard for their own honour, to resist the ardent solicitations of a seducer. Therefore measures cannot be taken too early to place them intact in their husbands' hands. Those who are unable to enter into any lawful union form a connexion as concubines with any man who cares to receive them as such.

Polygamy is tolerated amongst persons of high rank, such as rajahs, princes, statesmen, and others. Kings are allowed five legitimate wives, but never more. None the less this plurality of wives amongst the great is looked upon as an infraction of law and custom, in fact, as an abuse. But in every country in the world those in power have always been able to twist the law in their own favour, however definitely it may be laid down. The principal Hindu gods had only one wife. Brahma had only Sarasvati; Vishnu, Lakshmi; and Siva, Parvati. It is quite true that under their different forms these venerable personages committed frequent breaches of their marriage vow; but this only serves to prove that from the earliest times marriage was looked upon by the Hindus as a legal union between two persons of opposite sexes.

If in the present day any person of inferior rank cohabits with several women, one only of them bears the name and title of wife; the others are merely concubines. In several castes the children of the latter are illegitimate, and if the father dies without having previously settled some of his property upon them, they have no share when it comes to be divided. I only know of one case in which a man can legally marry a second wife, his first being still alive; and that is when, after he has lived for a long time with his wife, she is certified to be barren, or if she has only borne female children; for in the

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latter case *the debt to one's ancestors*—that is to say, the birth of a son—is considered to have been imperfectly paid. But even in this case, before a man contracts a second marriage it is necessary that he should obtain the consent of the first; and she is always regarded as the chief wife and retains all her prerogatives.

It may be remembered that for the same reason Abraham took Hagar to be his wife during the lifetime and with the consent of Sarah, his lawful wife. One may also remember what dissensions arose in the family of the holy patriarch as the result of this marriage with two women. It is exactly the same in Hindu families where there are two legal wives. Consequently the majority of Hindu husbands prefer, under such circumstances, to give up the hope of having a son, rather than be subjected to the numberless troubles which are the invariable result of the remedy permitted by law.

Some modern writers have hazarded the theory that in hot countries the number of women greatly exceeds that of men. It is Bruce, I think, who first advanced this opinion in his account of his travels in Arabia and Abyssinia. Even before my own experience had led me to a totally different conclusion on this point, it had always appeared to me that his deductions were wrong, or at any rate doubtful. If my memory does not deceive me, this author tried to prove the numerical excess of the female sex from the fact that in the families of some Arab princes, amongst a large number of children hardly one-sixth were males; and from this particular instance he drew a general conclusion. It is evident that the calculation is fundamentally wrong. To obtain a sound basis on which to found such a conclusion, a census must be taken of a large number of families of all classes, and upon that alone can such a rule of proportion be drawn. The proportion of births in the harems of a few Eastern princes, with many wives, cannot furnish any standard from which to determine what takes place amongst the people themselves, where conjugal union is restricted to what it ought to be according to the laws of healthy morality and true civilization.

Some sceptics, however, turning this pretended discovery of Bruce to account, have drawn from it what they consider an incontrovertible argument to prove that religion is merely

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a question of geography, and that Christianity cannot be suitable for all countries and all nations; for marriage being the natural state of all human beings, a religion that forbids polygamy would in hot countries reduce more than half of one sex to a state of enforced celibacy. But supposing the hypothesis on which this objection to the universality of Christianity is based to be as true as I believe it to be false, it seems to me that it would prove the existence of little or nothing contrary to Divine Providence, who in giving us the inestimable benefit of divine revelation, as manifested by the teaching of an Incarnate God, appears to have designed that this precious gift of Christianity should be shared by all the inhabitants of the terrestrial globe. It seems to me that, for this objection to have any weight, it is necessary to prove that amongst the whole of the human race, taken collectively, there is a much larger number of the female than of the male sex; for it is upon the whole human race, taken collectively, that the Creator looks as on one large family. In each individual member of this family He sees only the being created in His own image, without distinction of country, colour, language, or bodily form; and His intention was that all men should form one common brotherhood, united by all the ties of a common nature and common origin.

At the same time I have reason to believe, from my own personal observation, that the view is utterly wrong which holds that in hot climates the number of women far exceeds that of the men. For many years I exercised my religious calling in many parts of the Indian Peninsula, and I paid particular attention to the point in question. From exact registers which I kept of all baptisms, it may be seen that I yearly administered this sacrament to two or three hundred children of all castes; and I have been able to prove that during any single year the preponderance in births of one sex over the other never exceeded fifteen to twenty-five, and that it was sometimes one and sometimes the other sex which predominated within these narrow limits. These registers, which extended over a period of more than twenty-five years, are no longer within my reach; but I am convinced that out of perhaps 6,000 children baptized by me, one sex did not outnumber the other by more than 200. Another convincing proof that the proportion of the two sexes is about equal in India, is furnished

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by the Brahmins, who can only have one legitimate wife, and for whom marriage is obligatory. One hardly ever meets with a woman who is not, or has not been, married. Blind, dumb, deaf, or lame, all find husbands amongst poor Brahmins, whose low fortunes do not allow them to aspire to an alliance with any more attractive spouse.

It may, it is true, be retorted that amongst Brahmins a widow cannot remarry, whereas a widower may at once take to himself another wife. The consequence is, it may be urged, that the women of this caste must be more numerous than the men. But I reply that the age at which the two sexes marry compensates for this difference. Girls are married when seven or even five years old, whilst boys wait till they are sixteen, twenty, or even older. I am therefore decidedly of opinion that in hot as well as in temperate climates the births of the two sexes are nearly equal; and that polygamy is opposed to all laws, both natural and divine[1].

This unnatural custom of polygamy, which finds a place amongst some nations, may be attributed to sinful lust, to abuse of the power of the strong over the weak, and to the dominion of the one sex over the other. It is evidently altogether contrary to the intention of the Creator, who, when He created the father of mankind, gave him only one woman to wife, and indeed ordained that man and his one companion should form but one flesh[2].

A celebrated statesman of the last century (Burke), speaking on this subject from a political point of view, said that the Christian religion, by bringing marriage back to its primitive and only legitimate state, had contributed more by that alone to

[1] According to the Census Report of 1891, to every 1,000 males there are returned only 958 females; and the tables show that there are in the country fewer females than males to the number of, speaking roundly, 6½ millions. The deficiency is greatest in the Punjab, N. W. Provinces, and Rajputana. In Bengal, Madras, and Upper Burma, however, females are in excess to the extent of something under three-quarters of a million. The conclusion arrived at with regard to the deficiency of females is that it is to a large extent due to deliberate concealment and deliberate omission from the Census returns. But the Report remarks: 'The subject of sex is a very intricate one, and the more one studies it the less inclined is a cautious statist to adopt any single explanation.' The Report examines the whole question at considerable length. —ED.

[2] Genesis ii. 24.

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the general peace, happiness, stability, and civilization of the human race, than it would have been possible for it to do in any other department of divine providence.

The indissolubility of the marriage tie is also an essential principle which it seems to me is not less firmly established amongst the Hindus than that which limits this important act to the legal union of one man with one woman. A Hindu can only put away his legitimate wife for one cause, and that is adultery. If this rule is violated, it is only among the most degraded of the lower castes. A marriage can also be annulled if it has been contracted in violation of the prohibitory degrees which are laid down by custom, and which of themselves are sufficient to nullify the union.

I have never yet heard of a divorce being permitted on account of incompatibility of temper, nor have I ever heard of a man being allowed to put away his wife, however vicious she might be, simply in order to marry another woman. Hindus, as I shall presently show, put too serious a value on this solemn contract to allow it to be thus degraded to a state which would be nothing more or less than concubinage. A Hindu, and especially a Brahmin, would hardly be inclined to repudiate his wife even for adultery, unless her guilt were very notorious. As a general rule, when the wife of a Brahmin gives occasion, by injudicious behaviour, for remarks of a kind damaging to her character, her friends and relatives do their utmost to excuse her conduct and to hush up all scandal about her, so as to avoid the necessity of such an extreme measure as a divorce, the disgrace of which would reflect on the whole caste.

I will now give a detailed account of the principal ceremonies which take place both before and at the time of a wedding.

A young Brahmin should, ordinarily speaking, be married when he is about sixteen years of age, but the ceremony is often postponed till he is older than this. The wife chosen for him is generally five, seven, or at the utmost nine years old[1].

[1] The Jews also married their children at an early age. A youth who was not married before he was eighteen was considered by them to be sinning against the command of the Creator, which says: 'Increase and multiply.' He was free to marry as soon as he had attained the age of thirteen. Their daughters were betrothed in childhood, and were married as soon as they had arrived at a suitable age, which was usually fixed by them at twelve.—DUBOIS.

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This custom of marrying girls in their early childhood, and as soon as possible, though common to all castes, is most strictly observed by the Brahmins. When once a girl has passed the marriageable age, it is very difficult for her to find a husband. In this caste there is often an enormous difference in age between the husband and the wife. It is no uncommon thing to see an old man of sixty or more, having lost his first wife, marry for the second time a little child five or six years old, and even prefer her to girls of mature age. What is the result of this? The husband generally dies long before his wife, and often even before she has attained the age which would allow him to exercise his rights as a husband. So the poor girl becomes a widow before she has even become a wife, and as by the custom of her caste she may not marry again, she is oftentimes tempted to lead a dissolute life, thereby reflecting discredit on the whole caste. Everybody recognizes these abuses, but the idea of remedying them, by allowing a young widow to break through the stern rule of custom and marry again, would never even enter the head of a Hindu, more especially of a Brahmin[1]. It is true that the strange preference which Brahmins have for children of very tender years would make such a permission almost nominal in the case of their widows[2].

The expenses of a wedding are so considerable that in all castes one often sees young men, who are without the necessary means, using the same expedient to procure a wife that Jacob employed with Laban. Just like the holy patriarch a Hindu without means will enter the service of one of his relations, or of some other person of the same caste who has daughters to marry, and will engage himself to serve for a certain number of years without wage, on condition that, at the end of that time, he is to receive one of the daughters in marriage. When the time agreed upon has expired the father fulfils his promise, undertakes the whole expense of the marriage, and then allows the young couple to go away and live where they please. At

[1] Hindu social reformers are now agitating for virgin-widow-remarriages, and in a few instances such marriages have been brought about.—ED.

[2] Amongst the Jews it was permissible for widows to marry again; but those who voluntarily, out of respect and affection for their dead husbands, refrained from marrying again, were looked up to with very great respect. —DUBOIS.

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their departure he gives them a cow, a pair of oxen, two copper vessels (one for drinking, the other for their food), and enough rice to feed them for the first year of their married life. It is very remarkable that in India the term which a man has to serve for his wife is the same as that for which Jacob bound himself to Laban, namely seven years (Genesis xxix. 20)[1].

The inclinations of the persons about to be married are never consulted. In fact, it would be ridiculous to do so amongst the Brahmins, seeing the age at which they marry their daughters. But even the Sudras, who often do not marry their daughters until they have attained full age, would never dream of consulting the tastes and feelings of their children under these circumstances. The choice is left entirely to the parents. That which chiefly concerns the young man's family is the purity of the caste of his future wife. Beauty and personal attractions of any kind count for nothing in their eyes. The girl's parents look more particularly to the fortune of their future son-in-law, and to the character of his mother, who after the marriage becomes the absolute mistress of the young wife[2].

The same months are chosen for a wedding as are selected for the ceremony of the *upanayana*, that is to say, the months of March, April, May, and June, and especially the two last[3].

However, it is possible in a case of urgency for a marriage to take place in November or February. But in both these months there are so many precautions to be observed, so many calculations to be made according to the signs of the Zodiac, the phase of the moon, and other ridiculous follies, that it is far from easy to find a day on which all the auspices are propitious.

There are four different ways of arranging the preliminaries of a marriage. The first, the most honoured and respected of all, is for the father of the bride not only to refuse to receive

[1] No such custom exists now.—ED.

[2] A Sanskrit verse, commonly quoted, says: 'The girl courts beauty; the mother, riches; the father, knowledge; relatives, good lineage; other people, sumptuous marriage-feasts.'—ED.

[3] It is probable that the original reason why the Hindus selected these four months as the most auspicious for marriages, is that during these months all agricultural work is either finished or suspended on account of the great heat, and also because the crops, which have just been gathered in, help to defray the expenses of the wedding. —DUBOIS.

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the sum of money to which he is entitled from the young man's parents, but to undertake to bear all the expenses of the ceremony, to purchase all the jewels and other ornaments which it is customary to give a girl on this occasion, and also to make handsome presents to the son-in-law and his parents. But this can only be done by the rich and people of high position.

The second way is for the parents of both the contracting parties to agree to share all the expenses. The third method is that usually adopted by people of all castes who are not rich. The parents of the girl insist not only on the youth's parents bearing all the expenses of the wedding and of the jewels, but they also exact payment of a sum of money in return for their daughter, the amount of which is laid down by caste custom. This method is the commonest of all; for to marry and to buy a wife are synonymous expressions in India. Most parents make a regular traffic of their daughters. The wife is never given up to her husband until he has paid the whole of the sum agreed upon[1]. This custom is an endless source of quarrels and disputes. If a poor man, after the marriage has taken place, cannot pay the stipulated amount, his father-in-law sues him for it, and takes his daughter away hoping that the desire to have her back again will induce the man to find the money. Sometimes this succeeds, but it pretty often happens

[1] It was the custom also among the Jews for the husband to give the wife her dower. Genesis xxxiv. 8, 9, &c., xxxi. 15; 1 Samuel xviii. 25; Hosea iii. 2.—DUBOIS.

This is not true in the majority of instances, though there may be extreme cases of the kind. The following words were uttered recently by one of the speakers at an annual conference of the Kistna District Association: 'Gentlemen! The monstrous custom of selling girls needs no words of mine to make you try to root it out from our society. I will give you one particular case which will show you the advisability of taking proper steps to remove the evil. A certain gentleman, in a certain village, married his daughter, ten years old, to an old man of eighty-one, and received Rs. 2,000 for the bargain. In due course the girl matured, and the nuptial ceremony was performed. The girl was sent to her hated husband, much against her will. She escaped from the room in the dead of night and threw herself into a well. When the old man awoke in the morning he missed his young wife, and, on search being made, her dead body was found floating in a well. There are several instances of this sort. In some cases, if the ill-assorted pair be seen together, the bride will appear as a daughter, or even a grand-daughter. The young brides become widows even in a week after their marriages. These evils are too apparent to me, and I think you will enthusiastically carry this resolution.'—ED.

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that the son-in-law, being always unable to pay the debt, leaves his wife for years as a pledge with his father-in-law, and at last the latter, convinced that by this means he will get nothing, and fearing lest his daughter should succumb to the temptations to which her youth exposes her, withdraws his demands. A compromise is effected and the husband at length regains his wife[1].

The fourth method, to which none but the very poorest have recourse, is very mortifying to the girl's parents, for they go themselves and hand her over to the tender mercies of the young man's parents, leaving it to them to do what they will with her, to marry her when and how they like, to spend as little or as much as they choose on the wedding, and begging them at the same time to pay them something for their daughter.

As soon as the parents have discovered a suitable girl, and have ascertained if the family are likely to assent, they choose a day when all the auguries are favourable, and go to formally ask for her. They provide themselves with a new cloth, such as is worn by women, a cocoanut, five bananas, some vermilion, and some powdered sandalwood. While on the way, they pay great attention to any omens that they may notice. If they consider them to be unfavourable they retrace their steps, and postpone the business till another day. Thus, for instance, if a snake cross their path, or a cat, or a jackal, or if they should happen to see anything that is regarded as an evil omen[2], they decide that the best thing to do is to return to their home.

If nothing of this sort has disturbed them on the way, they present themselves at the house of the girl's parents and make known the object of their visit. The latter, before giving any answer, look steadfastly towards the south, and wait till one of those little lizards which one sees running about the walls of a house has uttered a certain sharp cry, such as these reptiles often make. Then when *the Lizard of the South* has spoken,

[1] I do not believe that any Hindu father of respectability would take such a step.—ED.

[2] All Hindus are full of these superstitions. No matter how important the business may be that they are about to undertake, they will never hesitate for a moment to put it off, if they catch sight of one of these objects or one of these animals. I have several times seen labourers take their oxen back to their sheds, and remain idle all day, simply because when leaving the village in the morning, a snake had crossed their path.—DUBOIS.

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the parents of the girl give their consent to the marriage, and accept the present which has been brought by the other parties.

In the evening of the same day, about dusk, they call together a few relatives and friends, and summon a *purohita* in order to consult him about the marriage. Whilst the men, seated on mats or carpets, are talking together, the women purify a part of the house; that is to say, they rub the floor well with cow-dung mixed with water, and then draw lines of red and white upon it. As soon as they have finished, they bring in the god Vigneshwara, to whom they do *puja*, and for *neiveddya* they offer peas, sugar, a cocoanut, and a sweet beverage called *paramanna*. All present worship this god, and pray him to remove any obstacles which might interfere with the projected marriage. If during this ceremony *the Lizard of the South* again utters his cry they think it a favourable omen.

After this ceremony, the *purohita* fixes on a lucky day on which to begin to celebrate the marriage. The parents of the girl then definitely give their permission, and in token of their promise they offer betel to all those who are present. These preliminaries ended, they begin to think of making preparations for the wedding. Gold and silver ornaments are ordered for the couple, and form the subject of endless discussion. The wedding garments are also got ready, a large number of cloths, such as are worn by both men and women, are bought to be given away as presents to relations and friends, a large store is laid in of rice, wheat flour, liquefied butter, oil of sesamum, peas of all kinds, dried and fresh vegetables[1], fruits, groceries, pickles, and in fact every sort of edible that a Brahmin is permitted to use. They also provide saffron, or turmeric, vermilion, antimony, sandalwood powder, incense, quantities of flowers, *akshatas*, or coloured rice, betel, areca-nut, &c., &c.; also a great quantity of small silver and copper coins. Further, they buy new baskets, and above all, plenty of new earthen vessels of all shapes and kinds; for these vessels may never be used a second time, and are immediately broken after being once used, no matter to what purpose they have been put.

[1] Amongst the many kinds of vegetables which Brahmins eat, there are three which are considered particularly choice; these are a species of small round pea, the *katri kai* (the *belingela* of the Portuguese, a sort of brinjal or egg-plant), and pumpkins. Among fruits they also have a preference for three — bananas, mangoes, and jack-fruit.—DUBOIS.

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When everything is ready, they begin to put up a *pandal* or canopy. The god Vigneshwara is carried into it, and to him they do *puja*, entreating him to ward off any hindrance or misfortune which might happen during the celebration of the marriage.

The *purohita* who presides at the ceremony must be one of the first to take up his place under the *pandal*; he must be provided with some *darbha* grass, small pieces of wood from the seven sacred trees, and a few other indispensable objects for the sacrifices he is about to offer up.

In the first place, due honour is paid to the household gods. To this end all the Brahmins present, both men and women, anoint their heads with oil of sesamum, and then bathe. The women, after preparing the various dishes for the feast, take a portion from each, which they place on a metal dish, and proceed, singing songs and accompanied by all the guests, to offer it as *neiveddya* to these gods, having first, of course, done *puja* to them. They even go so far as to place to the right of them pickles, to give a relish to their rice, while on their left they place a cup full of the sweet drink called *para-manna*, with which to quench their thirst. The master of the house then performs the *sam-kalpa* and offers sandalwood, *akshatas*, flowers, and lustral water to his guests, who ought, when receiving all this, to think of the household gods, in whose honour the feast immediately following is spread, great pains having been taken to make it bountiful and magnificent. Betel is distributed at the termination of the repast, after which the guests disperse.

The second day, nine Brahmins specially chosen for the purpose perform the sacrifice of *homam* and another to fire, in honour of the nine planets, as at the ceremony of the *upanayana*. Two women take the consecrated fire and carry it, singing the while, to the centre of the *pandal*, placing it on the raised daïs of earth. Each of the women then receives a present of a new cloth, and a little bodice called *ravikai*. All present then walk round the brazier of hot coal reciting *mantrams*, scattering *darbha* grass and bowing to the ground. Presents are given to the nine Brahmins who have sacrificed to the planets, and, as usual, the meeting ends with a feast.

The third day the father of the bridegroom, having made his

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ablutions, takes some *akshatas* in a cup, and goes out early to call together relatives and friends. As soon as all are assembled under the *pandal*, a pure cloth or carpet is spread on the raised earthen daïs, and the future husband and wife are seated thereon facing the east. The married women then approach them and rub their heads with oil, singing the while, and then proceed with the important ceremony known as *nalangu*, which consists in smearing the naked parts of their bodies with powdered saffron, and immediately after pouring a great quantity of warm water over their heads[1]. The women never cease singing the whole time, and are accompanied by musical instruments. After the *nalangu* is over the women array the young couple in new clothes, as has already been described in the chapter on the *upanayana*. The evening of the same day, at the moment when the lamps are being lighted, the guests return to assist at the following ceremony:—The married women, singing all the time, take a wooden cylinder which they cover with lime and then paint with red longitudinal stripes. On this they tie small twigs of the mango-tree. They next sprinkle a great quantity of powdered saffron over the cylinder, which they immediately afterwards dip into a new earthen vessel. This they carry with much solemnity, singing the while, to the centre of the *pandal*, where they offer it a sacrifice of incense, and offer some betel for *neiveddya*. Every person present makes a profound obeisance to the vessel. No other saffron but what is thus consecrated is used during the whole ceremony.

All these proceedings are merely preparatory to the marriage ceremony itself, which lasts for five days.

The first day is called *muhurta*, that is to say, the great day, or the happy and auspicious day. It is on this day that the most important and solemn ceremonies take place. The head of the family goes out early to invite his guests, while the women busy themselves with purifying the house and the *pandal*, which they decorate all round with wreaths of mango leaves. The guests having arrived stand in a row, and first adorn their foreheads with *akshatas* and sandalwood. They next anoint their heads with the oil of sesamum which is

[1] *Nalangu* is not a religious ceremony. The powdered saffron is mixed with quicklime, and made into a paste which is red in colour. It is rubbed only on the feet.—ED.

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provided for them, and then they go and perform their ablutions. On their return the *purohita* performs the *sam-kalpa* and invokes all their gods, beginning with Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Devendra, and then the twelve Adityas, the eight Vasus, the nine Brahmas, the eleven Rudras, the Gandharvas, the Siddhas, the Saddhyas, the Naradas, the seven great Penitents, the nine planets; in fact, every deity whose name occurs to his memory. With low obeisances he invites them all to come to the marriage-feast, makes many flattering speeches to them, and begs them to remain under the *pandal*, and to preside over the ceremony during the five days that it lasts.

Then comes the invocation of ancestors. The couple about to be married are seated on the earthen daïs in the centre of the *pandal*, having on each side of them their fathers and mothers, all with their faces turned towards the East. The father of the bride rises, places the *pavitram* amulet on the ring-finger of his right hand, performs the *sam-kalpa*, and puts a certain quantity of rice in a metal dish, and on this rice a cocoanut dyed yellow, three areca-nuts in their shells, and five others without their shells[1].

Then, taking one of the nuts in one hand and the metal dish in the other, he repeats three times in a loud voice the names of his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. Each time he pronounces their names he raps the copper dish three times with the areca-nut, and at last, again invoking them by name, he says: 'O my ancestors, you who dwell in the *pitra-loka* (or paradise of ancestors), deign to come to this *pandal*, bringing with you all the other ancestors who preceded you. Be present, I beseech you, during the five days of this marriage-feast, preside at the festivity, and grant to it a happy termination!' He then gives the rice, the cocoanut, and the areca-nut which were on the dish to the *purohita*.

This done, the married women bring some fire on a new earthen chafing-dish, and, singing, place it in the centre of the *pandal*. The *purohita* then consecrates it by scattering all round it some *darbha* grass. To the north of it he places some

[1] These various objects are an offering which he makes to his ancestors when inviting them to the wedding. It is always considered polite to offer a present to any distinguished guest whom you invite to any ceremony.—DUBOIS.

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small pieces of the sacred fig-tree, by the side of which are placed three small earthen vessels and one of copper. The first contains milk, the second liquefied butter, the third curds, and the fourth a certain quantity of cooked and uncooked rice mixed together. To the south of the brazier are spread nine portions of rice on a large banana leaf. These are tastefully arranged in squares, each portion being destined for one of the nine planets. *Puja* is done to each of these nine planets individually, and offerings of bananas and betel are made to them as *neiveddya*, after which they receive the same invitation as the gods and the ancestors.

The *purohita* places on the east side of the brazier another banana leaf, on which he spreads *darbha* grass and *akshatas*. This is an offering to Brahma, to whom is presented a *neiveddya* of raw sugar and betel. Then follows the invocation of the *ashta-dik-palakas*, or the eight divine guardians of the eight corners of the world; and *puja* is offered them on the same banana leaf. Then comes the inauguration of the *ishta-devata* or tutelary deity, and the deification of the five little pots in the manner that has already been described for the *upanayana*.

These ceremonies ended, the father of the girl performs the *homam* in honour of Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra, of the eight gods who guard the eight compass-points of the world, of the eight Vasus, and of Indra, taking care to mention all these gods by name, and also to repeat *mantrams* suitable to the occasion. He again does *homam* to the nine planets, makes a sacrifice to fire, and offers the latter some liquefied butter as *neiveddya*.

A new earthen chafing-dish is then brought, to which they fasten a piece of saffron thread, and on it is placed the consecrated fire. Women carry this fire away to a place apart, singing, of course, the while. Great care is taken not to let the fire go out till the end of the festivity. It would be considered a terribly bad omen if, through negligence or any other cause, it should be extinguished.

Now comes the *muhurta*, that is to say, the most essential ceremony of the marriage. To begin with, a sacrifice is offered to Vigneshwara. The bride and bridegroom are seated on the earthen daïs, their faces towards the east, and the married women proceed, singing the while, with the young people's toilette, which is of the most elegant and sumptuous description.

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When attired the bridegroom rises, performs the *sam-kalpa*, prays to the gods to pardon all the sins he has committed since he received the triple cord; and, to be the more sure of this pardon, he recites a *mantram*, and gives fifteen fanams to a Brahmin as alms. He then dresses himself up as a pilgrim, and makes all preparations as if he were really going to take a long journey, announcing that he is going to start on a holy pilgrimage to Kasi, that is Benares. He leaves the house accompanied by the married women singing in chorus, and by his parents and friends, and preceded by instruments of music. After passing the outskirts of the village he turns his steps to the east.

But here his future father-in-law meets him, and asks him where he is going, and on learning the object of his journey, begs him to give it up. He tells him that he has a young virgin daughter, and that if he wishes it he will give her to him in wedlock. The pilgrim accepts the proposal with joy, and returns with his escort to the place whence he set out. On his return the women perform the ceremony of the *aratti*.

The bride and bridegroom having again taken their places on the daïs, and the *sam-kalpa* having been performed, they then begin the important ceremony called *kankana*[1]. For this purpose they obtain two pieces of saffron or turmeric, round which they tie a double thread. They place on a metal dish two handfuls of rice, and on this rice a cocoanut painted yellow, and on the cocoanut the two pieces of saffron. Prayers are offered to all the gods collectively, who are implored to come and place themselves on this *kankana*, and to remain there till the five days of the marriage ceremony have been accomplished. The bridegroom then takes one of the pieces of saffron and ties it on his wife's left wrist, who in her turn ties the other piece on his right wrist. The rice and cocoanut on which the *kankana* has been lying are then given to the *purohita*.

Then follows the procession of the tutelary deity. The mother of the bride, accompanied by the other women and the Brahmins who are present, go and fetch the copper vase which represents the *ishta-devata*. The women begin to sing and the musicians to play, and forming a procession they march to the

[1] The ceremony is actually called *kankana-dharana*, that is, the tying or wearing of the *kankana*.—ED.

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end of the street, where, after choosing a clean spot, they pour out some of the water contained in the vase. They do *puja* to the deity while it rests on the ground, and then it is taken back with the same pomp to the place whence it came. Then follows the most important ceremony of all, which is called *kania-dana*, or *the gift of the virgin*. This is what takes place. The bridegroom being seated facing the east, his father-in-law performs the *sam-kalpa*, places himself in front of him, and looks at him fixedly for some time without speaking. He is supposed to imagine that he sees in his son-in-law the great Vishnu; and with this in his mind, he offers him a sacrifice of *arghya*, *padya*, *achamania*, *akshatas*, sandalwood, and flowers. A new copper vessel is then brought. In this the young man places his feet, which his father-in-law washes first with water, then with milk, and then again for the third time with water, while reciting suitable *mantrams*.

He performs the great *sam-kalpa*, which consists in adding to the ordinary *sam-kalpa* (vide Part I, Chapter XIII) the names and attributes of the *Bharata Varsha*, the *Sali-vahana*, the seven islands, the seven seas, the seven *puras* or cities, the seven Penitents, the seven mountains, the sacred places (*punya-sthalas*), and the holy cities (*punya puras*).

He next thinks of his father, his grandfather, and great-grandfather. Pronouncing their names aloud, he prays that these and the twenty-one other ancestors who have preceded them, may attain *moksha* (or paradise). Then, holding betel in one hand and taking his daughter's hand in the other, he says a prayer to Vishnu, begging him to look with a gracious eye on this gift that he is making of his virgin daughter. He then places her hand in that of her future husband, pours a little water over it, and gives him some betel, the usual token of a gift.

The *gift of the virgin* is followed by three other gifts, namely, the *go-dana*, *bhu-dana*, and *salagrama-dana*, which mean the gift of cows, the gift of land, and the gift of *salagramas*, or small stones, to which they attach a superstitious value, and which will be spoken of later on.

Then follows the ceremony called *mangalashta*[1]. The bride

[1] This means 'the eight marriage blessings.' The ceremony concludes with the throwing of coloured rice over the couple by way of blessing them.—ED.

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and bridegroom are seated facing each other, and a sheet of silk is suspended in front of them. This is held by twelve Brahmins, and hides them from the other guests, who successively invoke in a loud voice Vishnu and his wife Lakshmi, Brahma and Sarasvati, Siva and Parvati, the Sun and his wife Chhaya, the Moon and his wife Rohini, Indra and Sathi, Vasishta and Arundhati, Rama and Sita, Krishna and Rukmani, and several other pairs of gods and goddesses.

As soon as the *mangalashta* is finished they fasten on the *tali*, that is, the little gold ornament which all married women wear round their necks; the *tali* is strung on a little cord which is dyed yellow with saffron water, and composed of 108 very fine threads closely twisted together. Other little ornaments of gold are also added, round which are fastened flowers and fine black seeds. Two handfuls of rice are placed in a metal pot, on the rice is laid a cocoanut dyed yellow, and on the top of the cocoanut the *tali*, to which they offer a sacrifice of sweet perfumes. The *tali* is then taken round to all the guests, both men and women, who touch it and bless it[1].

Four large metal lamps, each with four wicks, are brought in and placed on a stand, which must also be of the same metal. Above are set other lamps fashioned out of a paste composed of ground rice, and these are filled with oil. They are lighted, and four women take them in their hands. At the same time all round the *pandal* a great number of other lamps are lighted. Then ensues a tremendous din. The women sing, the musicians play, bells are rung, cymbals are clashed, and anything and everything within reach from which sound can be extracted is seized on, each one striving to outdo the other in creating noise[2].

In the midst of this hubbub the husband advances towards his young wife, who is seated facing the east, and while reciting *mantrams* he fastens the *tali* round her neck, securing it with three knots.

The husband and wife, sitting side by side, then offer each other betel. Two married women approach them, give them

[1] Old ladies whose husbands are alive are specially requested to touch and bless the *tali*, to ensure the couple a long married life.—ED.

[2] This noise is intended to drown any sounds of weeping, sneezing quarrelling, &c., which are considered bad omens.—ED.

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their blessing, and place *akshatas*, which have been consecrated by *mantrams*, on their heads, and finally perform the ceremony of *aratti*.

Fire is then brought on a new earthen brazier, and the *purohita* consecrates it with *mantrams*, surrounds it with *darbha* grass, and does *homam* to it. The fire is surrounded by lighted lamps, and near it is placed a small stone called the sandalwood stone, no doubt because it has been smeared with sandalwood oil. Then the husband, holding his wife's hand, walks three times round the sacred fire, and each time he makes the circuit he takes his wife's right foot in his right hand, and makes her touch the sandalwood stone with it, touching the stone with his own foot at the same time. Whilst performing this action the thoughts of both husband and wife should be directed to the great mountain of the North called *Sapta-kula parvata* or *the mountain of the seven castes*, the original home of their ancestors, the mountain being represented by this sandalwood stone.

These are the various ceremonies which compose the *muhurta*. As soon as they are finished, two bamboos are planted in the centre of the *pandal* side by side, and at the foot of each of them is placed a bamboo basket. The bride and bridegroom then stand up, each in a basket, and two other baskets full of rice are brought. They take handfuls of this rice and shower it over each other in turn. This they continue to do many times, until they are tired, or are told to stop[1].

In some castes the guests perform this ceremony, which is called *sesha*, for the newly married pair. Princes and very rich people have been known to use for the *sesha*, instead of rice, pearls and precious stones mixed together. After the *sesha* the couple return to their usual seat. *Akshatas* consecrated by *mantrams* are then distributed to the guests. The husband throws over his right shoulder a piece of new and clean cloth, one end of which he unfolds before the assembled Brahmins, from whom he receives a blessing, while they also recite a *mantram* and place a portion of the *akshatas* they have just

[1] In some countries the Jews of the present day observe a custom of throwing handfuls of wheat over a newly married couple, but especially over the wife, saying: 'Increase and multiply.' Sometimes pieces of money which are intended for the poor are mingled with the wheat.—DUBOIS.

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received on the cloth. He takes these in his hand and puts one portion on his own head, and the rest on his wife's head, after which the women again perform *aratti* to the newly married couple.

It is easy to see the allegorical meaning of most of the ceremonies which have just been described, and which are the most solemn and important of the whole proceedings. The *kania-dana*, for instance, typifies the handing over of the girl by the father to the son-in-law and the renunciation of parental authority over her. The son-in-law for his part fastens the *tali* round his wife's neck to show that he accepts the gift, and that from henceforth she is his property. The sacrifice of the *homam* and the thrice-repeated circuit of the newly married couple round the fire are a mutual ratification of the contract they have just made with one another, for there is no more solemn engagement than that entered into in the presence of fire, which Hindus look upon as the purest of their gods, and which for this reason they always prefer to any other when they wish to make an oath specially binding. The ceremony of the *mangalashta* is to call down divine blessings on the newly married couple. That of the *sesha* is the outward expression of the wish that they may enjoy an abundance of this world's goods, or that their union may be fruitful, or perhaps both.

When all these ceremonies are ended sandalwood powder, *akshatas*, and betel are given to all the Brahmins present, both men and women. All must then go and perform their ablutions and return for the feast, which on this day must be specially magnificent.

Before sitting down to eat, they never fail to carry with due solemnity to the household gods their share of the food which has been prepared.

All the guests being seated in a row upon the ground, the men quite apart from the women, so that the latter are out of sight, a large banana leaf is placed before each person, and a helping of boiled rice is placed on it, and on one side two other leaves, folded in the form of cups, one containing melted butter and the other a strongly spiced sauce. The second course consists of dried peas, green vegetables, and roots of various kinds. The third course consists of fritters, puddings boiled in water, others fried in butter, others sweetened and

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spiced, curdled milk, and salt pickles. Bananas, jack, and other fruits make up the fourth course. Then follows the *kalavanta*, which consists of four different dishes all highly flavoured, and composed of various ingredients mixed with rice. To finish the repast a beverage is handed round composed of limejuice, sugar, cardamom, and aniseed mixed with water. The whole meal takes place in absolute silence.

When all the guests have feasted they turn their attention to the meal for the newly married couple, not forgetting the necessary ceremonies connected with it. First of all the sacred fire is brought and placed before the daïs on which they are sitting. The husband rises and does *homam* to the fire, whilst the *purohita* repeats *mantrams*. Then the women form a procession, and singing take the fire back to its original place. The young married couple, holding each other by the hand, go to the place where the tutelary deity is reposing, and make a deep obeisance to it. The husband then does *puja* to it, and offers as *neiveddia* some cakes and boiled rice. They make a similar obeisance to the five little earthen vases placed near the deity, in which are sown ten kinds of seeds, and sprinkle them with water.

It is only after having gone through all these preliminaries that the young married couple are allowed to partake of the meal which has been specially prepared for them. They sit down facing one another in the centre of the *pandal* on two little stools, the bridegroom facing east. Before them is spread a large banana leaf, and at each of its four corners are placed four lamps made of ground rice filled with oil, which are lighted, as well as many others all round the *pandal*. Then the married women bring in on two metal dishes the different viands which have been prepared for the young couple, much singing and music going on the while. After they have been helped, melted butter is poured three times on to their fingers, and after swallowing this they begin to eat their food together from the same leaf[1]. To eat in this manner is a sign of the most complete union, and is the most unmistakable proof of friendship that two

[1] This custom is not observed nowadays in Hindu marriages, but the bridegroom and bride exchange comestibles from each other's leaves. When they live together afterwards the wife may, and does, eat off her husband's leaf, after he has finished eating.—ED.

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persons closely united could possibly give each other. Later on the wife will be allowed to eat what her husband leaves, but never again will she be permitted to eat in company with him. This is a favour which is only granted her on her wedding-day.

Their meal finished, the newly married couple go outside, preceded by music, and accompanied by the women singing, by all the guests, and by the *purohita*. The *purohita* points out to them a small star called *Arundhati*, the wife of the Penitent Vasishta, which is to be found near the pole-star. The couple make a deep reverence to the star and return to the house in the same procession[1]. There the women perform the ceremony of *aratti*. This terminates the ceremonies of the first day, called *muhurta*, or the great day.

I will spare my readers the details of the ceremonies which occupy the four following days, and which, as a rule, are merely a repetition of those just described. What little variety there is, is much in the same style. These ceremonies are interspersed with the most innocent games and amusements, which would appear to us utterly ridiculous, and only suitable for little children, but which afford them the greatest pleasure and infinite amusement.

Amongst the second day's ceremonies one of the most extraordinary is when they place a sort of ornament, called *bassinam*, on the forehead of both the husband and wife. This *bassinam* is covered with gold-leaf or gold paper, and flowers are entwined round it. The object of the *bassinam* is to avert the effects of the *drishti-dosha* or evil eye, the spell which is cast by the looks of jealous or ill-disposed people. Placed thus on the most conspicuous part of the body it is supposed to attract the eyes of the malevolent, and thus prevent them exercising their malign influence on the persons of the newly married couple.

Amongst the ceremonies which take place on the third day there is a peculiar one. The husband, as usual, performs the sacrifice of the *homam* and another to fire, and after him his wife comes up and performs the same sacrifice, only with this difference, that instead of using boiled rice, she uses parched rice. This is, I believe, the only occasion on which a woman

[1] Arundhati was the chaste and devoted wife of Vasishta Rishi; and when the couple look at this star they make a vow that they too will live like Vasishta and Arundhati.—ED.

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can take an active part in any of these sacrifices, which the Brahmins hold to be most sacred and most solemn.

The only remarkable ceremony which takes place on the fourth day is the *nalangu*, in which the newly married couple rub each other's legs three times with powdered saffron. I do not in the least understand the meaning of this ceremony. I fancy its only object is to kill time. Europeans under similar circumstances would spend it in drinking, often to excess; or in gambling, dancing, singing songs in honour of love and wine, sometimes even in carrying on intrigues with the object of loosening the sacred marriage tie, which it is the object of marriage ceremonies to make secure. The Hindus spend their wedding-days more wisely in religious observances, of which the greater number are well calculated to leave a lasting impression on the minds of those attending them. The innocent and artless games with which they amuse themselves afford them none the less pleasure because they are so. In the domestic festivities of the Brahmins, decency, modesty, purity, and reserve are always conspicuous. This is the more remarkable as they obey a religion whose dogmas are for the most part saturated with immorality.

The fifth day is chiefly occupied in dismissing, with all the customary formalities, the gods, the planets, the great penitents, the ancestors, and all the other divinities who have been invited to the feast. They dismiss even the *kankanam*, that is to say, the two pieces of saffron attached to the wrists of the newly made husband and wife. Finally, the god of the *mantapam*, that is to say of the *pandal*, is himself dismissed. Then follows the distribution of presents, which vary in value according to the means of the host. The *purohita* who has taken the most prominent part, and after him the women who have been singing the whole time from beginning to end, carry off the lion's share of these bounties. I must just mention that the songs which are sung at these ceremonies contain nothing obscene or even erotic; they are either a sort of explanation of the aim and object of each ceremony or else a long rigmarole in praise of the bride and bridegroom, in which they also give expression to the most heartfelt wishes for their future happiness.

The festivity ends with a solemn procession through the streets, which generally takes place at night by torchlight in

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the midst of squibs and fireworks of all kinds. The newly married pair are seated face to face in an open palanquin highly decorated. Both of them are loaded, rather than adorned, with flowers, jewels, and other ornaments, for the most part borrowed for the occasion. The procession advances slowly. Relatives and friends before whose houses it passes, come out to meet it. The women perform the ceremony of *aratti* to the couple, and the men give presents of silver, fruits, sugar, betel, &c. These gifts are really only a loan, for those who receive them are expected to return them on similar occasions to the givers. I have sometimes seen wedding processions that were really beautiful, though perhaps not quite according to our taste.

Such are a Brahmin's wedding ceremonies, all of which, and many more minute observances which I have not thought it worth while to mention, are scrupulously performed with more or less magnificence by rich as well as by poor.

Sudras' marriage ceremonies are equally solemn, though much less elaborate. In every caste marriage is looked upon as the most important affair in a man's life. It is also the most expensive one, and brings many a Hindu to ruin. Some spend on it all that they possess, and a great deal more besides; while others, in order to fulfil what is expected of them, contract debts which they are never able to repay [1].

I shall say nothing of the feasts which are given by their relatives and friends to the newly married couple, of the presents they receive, or of the ceremonies in their honour. I will only add that for a whole month the feasting and rejoicings go on.

When all the festivities have at length come to an end, the bride returns home with her parents, who keep her shut up till such time as she shall be able to fulfil all the duties of a wife. This also is another occasion for festivities. There is the same gathering of friends and relatives, and almost the same ceremonies, with a few exceptions, that took place at the first wedding. The father and mother of the bridegroom, on being informed that their daughter-in-law has arrived at an age when the marriage can be consummated, go and fetch her, and conduct

[1] One of the planks of the Social Reform platform is the reduction of marriage expenses.—ED.

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her home in triumph. And in order that she may become accustomed by degrees to married life, her own parents come at the end of a month and take her back to her own home, and for the first few years, or until she has children, she lives alternately in her parents' and in her husband's house. These mutual arrangements are at first a proof of the happy understanding existing between the two families. But unfortunately this harmony rarely lasts long, for very soon, finding herself ill-treated and even beaten by her husband, and tormented in a thousand ways by an exacting mother-in-law who treats her like a slave and vents upon her all her whims and ill-temper, the poor young wife is forced to a surreptitious flight, seeking shelter and protection under her father's roof. Then, relying on promises of better treatment in future, she consents to resume her fetters; but fresh outrages soon force her to escape again. In the end, resigning herself to the inevitable, or for the sake of her children, she gives up the struggle, and meekly bows to marital authority. A real union with sincere and mutual affection, or even peace, is very rare in Hindu households. The moral gulf which exists in this country between the sexes is so great that in the eyes of a native the woman is simply a passive object who must be abjectly submissive to her husband's will and fancy. She is never looked upon as a companion who can share her husband's thoughts and be the first object of his care and affection. The Hindu wife finds in her husband only a proud and overbearing master who regards her as a fortunate woman to be allowed the honour of sharing his bed and board. If there are some few women who are happy and beloved by those to whom they have been blindly chained by their family, this good fortune must be attributed to the naturally kind disposition of their husbands, and not in any way to the training the latter have received [1].

A Brahmin *purohita* does not usually preside at a Sudra marriage unless the contracting parties are very rich and of high position, and thus able to recompense him handsomely. Generally the ceremony is performed by one of the mendicant Brahmins who go about selling Hindu almanacs from door to door.

[1] The spread of education, though it has not extended far amongst Hindu women, is gradually changing many of these domestic evils.—ED.

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In each caste custom differs as to the manner in which a bride is demanded, the sum of money paid for her, the quantity and the value of her jewels, the colour and price of the wedding garments, the arrangements as to who shall defray the expenses of the ceremony, the number of feasts provided for the guests, and the presents made to relatives and friends.

Amongst the Sudras the erection of the *pandal* is one of the most important and solemn of the ceremonies. It is set up in the street, opposite the entrance-door of the house, seven, five, or three days before the wedding festivities begin. As soon as it is put up a procession is formed, accompanied by music, to fetch the *ara-sani*, that is to say, a green branch of the sacred fig-tree with leaves on it. This is planted in the centre of the *pandal*; *puja* is offered to it and also votive offerings. All present walk round it in single file, making deep obeisance to it. It represents Vishnu, to whom the sacred fig-tree is specially dedicated, and it remains in the middle of the *pandal* during the whole of the ceremonies as the tutelary god of the festivity. Processions round it take place at intervals, always accompanied by the same marks of respect. Another peculiarity at a Sudra wedding is that a lamp is kept alight in a prominent part of the *pandal* during the three days' festivities, the wick of which is composed of 108 threads. Among the Sudras also the number of earthen cooking-pots is restricted to ten.

The Brahmin who presides at the marriage begins by breaking one or more cocoanuts before the *ara-sani*, and according as the nut breaks in this or that direction, favourable or unfavourable auguries of the future of the newly married pair are determined. Almost all the other ceremonies are identical with those of the Brahmins.

At the marriage of Kshatriyas or Rajahs, the ceremonial differs very little from that of the Brahmins. A *purohita* invariably presides and takes the leading part. All the Brahmins who live in the place and in the neighbourhood are invited, but as they cannot eat with people of this caste, they receive each day portions of rice, melted butter, curdled milk, peas, vegetables, and fruits, which they cook for themselves and feast upon apart.

At the termination of the ceremonies they receive more or

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less valuable presents of cloths and other things according to their rank and in proportion to the means of the family who give the feast.

At the marriages of Kshatriyas, too, all the different kinds of weapons used in warfare are brought in with much solemnity, accompanied by the songs of the women and by instruments of music. These weapons remain hung up in the most conspicuous part of the *pandal* until the festivities are ended. The guests offer them sacrifices, and worship them from time to time, and similar processions are made round them to those of the Sudras round the sacred fig branch.

The work from which I have extracted these details gives particulars of a remarkable expedient for procuring a wife sometimes adopted by the noble caste of Kshatriyas. When a young man of this caste wishes to marry, instead of going through the usual prescribed forms and humiliating proceedings with the parents of the girl that he has in view, he exercises the right of carrying off the noble lady on whom he has set his affections. To ensure success in his enterprise he collects a numerous following, unexpectedly declares hostilities against the king whose son-in-law he hopes to be, and tries to wrest his daughter from him either by force or strategy. As soon as she is in his power he conducts her to his home in triumph, and celebrates the marriage with all due solemnity. This method of procuring a wife, says the author, is the most approved of all in the case of a Kshatriya; and, in fact, Hindu books often mention similar instances of rape, but always amongst the Rajah caste.

The ritual of the Brahmin *purohitas*, after describing in detail the ceremonies to be observed at a Kshatriya marriage, always terminates with a short sermon on the principal duties imposed on this noble caste.

'The real caste of Kshatriyas has ceased to exist,' says this same author, 'and the so-called Kshatriyas of the present time are a bastard race[1]. Whoever pretends to be a true Kshatriya

[1] This caste was almost entirely annihilated by Vishnu, who visited the earth in the person of Parasurama. The Kshatriyas, it is related, had increased to such an extent that they filled the whole earth, which they ruled with such unbearable tyranny, that Vishnu, with a view to deliver the world from their unjust oppression, began, as Parasurama, a long

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ought to know that he can only be a soldier, and nothing else, and that his one object in life is to make war. During a war he should be careful not to injure a labourer, an artisan, any one who flees before him, who asks his assistance or who places himself under his protection, any one who during the battle or after it lays down his arms and with supplicating hands asks for quarter. In a word, he should conduct himself in these circumstances according to the rules laid down in the *Dharma-sastra*. The true Kshatriya when engaged in fighting an enemy should give up all desire to live. Far be it from him to think of retreating or taking to flight! On the contrary, let him advance bravely, resolved to conquer or to die! The happiest death for a Kshatriya, the one he should wish for most, is to die sword in hand, fighting. It procures for him the inestimable happiness of being admitted to *Swarga*[1]. Boundless ambition is the highest virtue a Kshatriya can possess. However vast his possessions may be already, he should never say that he has enough. All his thoughts should tend to enlarging and extending his territories and to making war on neighbouring princes with a view to appropriating their possessions by main force. He should show faith and piety towards the gods; he should respect Brahmins, placing the utmost confidence in them, and loading them with gifts. Truth and justice are the foundations on which all his actions should be based. His leisure moments should be given up to reading the *Dhanurveda*[2], and other sacred works which he has the right to study, and he should regulate his conduct by the customs of his caste. Humane and generous, he must never refuse to do good to any one, whoever he may be, and it should be said of no one that he left a Kshatriya's presence unsatisfied. The best and most honourable way in which he can spend his wealth is to give abundant alms to Brahmins, to build temples with *gopurams*, to erect rest-houses and other buildings for public use on the high-roads, to repair those that are falling into decay, to sink

and bloody war against them, in which all the men of the caste were exterminated. Only the women were spared, and they became the concubines of Brahmins. The Kshatriyas of the present day are descendants of the bastards who resulted from these illegitimate unions.—DUBOIS.

[1] Paradise of Indra

[2] This Veda treats of the science of archery.—ED.

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wells and make reservoirs and tanks, and to establish *chutrams* (almshouses for Brahmins) in many places. He should do his best to rule his country with equity, and should keep a careful watch lest he act unjustly. He must give to all his subjects their due, and never exact from them more than what rightfully belongs to him. In short, his duty is to model his conduct in everything on the rules laid down in the *Dharma-sastra*.'

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CHAPTER VII

The second, or *Grahastha*, Status of Brahmin.—Rules of Life which the Brahmin *Grahastha* should daily follow.—Introduction.—Forms to be observed when relieving Nature and when Washing.—Manner of cleansing the Teeth.—*Sandhya*, Part I.—Rules relating to Ablutions.—The Correct Order of Daily Avocations.—Rules to be followed when Eating and when going to Bed.—*Sandhya*, Part II.—*Mantrams* of which the *Sandhya* is composed.—*Sandhya* for Morning, Noon, and Evening.—Conclusion.—General Remarks.

THE greater part of the matter contained in this chapter will not perhaps appear very interesting to some readers. However, the subject, considered from a philosophical point of view, seemed to me to be curious, and I think that many will forgive the prolix details that I am about to give for the sake of learning more exactly what the customs of the Brahmins really are. I have gleaned these details from the great book of Brahmin ritual called *Nittia-karma*. I shall classify them in parts and sections, as is usually done in works of this kind, and shall follow the divisions as they exist in the original. The name of *Grahastha* Brahmin is, strictly speaking, only given to those who are married, and who already have children. A young Brahmin after his marriage ceases virtually to be a *Brahmachari*, but as long as his wife by reason of her youth remains with her parents, he is not considered a real *Grahastha*. He only earns the right to this title after he has paid *the debt to his ancestors*, that is, by being the father of a son. Brahmins who have fulfilled this latter condition form the real bulk of the caste; it is they who uphold its rights and settle any differences that may arise. It is they who are expected to see that the customs are observed and to further them by precept and example.

INTRODUCTION.

The *Grahastha* should rise every day about an hour and a half before the sun appears above the horizon. On rising his

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first thoughts should be for Vishnu. He then calls upon the following gods to cause the sun to rise, saying: 'O Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu, Ketu, cause the dawn to appear'!

He pronounces the name of his *guru*, or spiritual teacher, and addresses the following prayer to him: 'I offer worship to you; to you who resemble the god whom I love most; it is by your wise advice that I am able to escape the dangers and perils of this world.'

He must then imagine himself to be the Supreme Being, and say: 'I am God! there is none other but me. I am Brahma; I enjoy perfect happiness, and am unchangeable.' He thinks deeply on this point with great complacency for some time, fully persuading himself that he is really Brahma. After this he addresses Vishnu thus: 'O god, who art a pure spirit, the giver of life to all things, the ruler of the universe, and the husband of Lakshmi, by your command I rise, and am about to occupy myself with the affairs of this world.'

He must then think of what work he has before him during the day, of the good deeds that he proposes to do, and of the best means of carrying out his intentions. He reminds himself that his daily tasks to be meritorious must be done zealously and piously, and not indifferently and perfunctorily. Whilst thus thinking he takes courage, and makes a resolution to do his best. After that he performs the *hari-smarana*, which consists in reciting aloud the litanies to Vishnu, and in repeating his thousand names[1].

These preliminaries ended, he must attend to the calls of nature, and the following are the rules which he must follow in this important matter:—

SECTION I.—*Rules to be observed by Brahmins when answering the calls of nature.*

I. Taking in his hand a big *chembu* (brass vessel) he will

[1] The *hari-smarana* consists in saying: 'Hail Govinda! Hail Kesava! Hail Narayana! Hail Hari!' &c., &c. It must not be supposed, however, that all the names and epithets by which this god is designated have any very flattering meanings attached to them. For instance, Govinda means cowherd; Kesava, 'he who has hair on his head'; Narayana, 'he who lives on the waters,' &c. Several other names of Vishnu are even more ridiculous than these.—DUBOIS.

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proceed to the place set apart for this purpose, which should be at least a bowshot from his domicile [1].

II. Arrived at the place he will begin by taking off his slippers, which he deposits some distance away, and will then choose a clean spot on level ground.

III. The places to be avoided for such a purpose are: the enclosure of a temple; the edge of a river, pond, or well; a public thoroughfare or a place frequented by the public; a light-coloured soil; a ploughed field; and any spot close to a banian or any other sacred tree.

IV. A Brahmin must not at the time wear a new or newly washed cloth.

V. He will take care to hang his triple cord over his left ear and to cover his head with his loin-cloth.

VI. He will stoop down as low as possible. It would be a great offence to relieve oneself standing upright or only half stooping: it would be a still greater offence to do so sitting on the branch of a tree or upon a wall.

VII. While in this posture he should take particular care to avoid the great offence of looking at the sun or the moon, the stars, fire, a Brahmin, a temple, an image, or one of the sacred trees.

VIII. He will keep perfect silence.

IX. He must chew nothing, have nothing in his mouth, and hold nothing on his head.

X. He must do what he has to do as quickly as possible, and rise immediately.

XI. After rising he will commit a great offence if he looks behind his heels.

XII. If he neglects none of these precautions his act will be

[1] I have decided only after much hesitation to give these somewhat disgusting details. To a judicious and enlightened student, however, a knowledge of the common, everyday habits of a nation is not without its use; and overcoming my natural repugnance on this account, I have ventured to believe that my readers will pardon me for not excising so important a section of the Brahmin's *vade mecum*. I may remark at the same time that all these minute details pertaining to cleanliness and health belong to an elaborate system of hygiene which extends to other practices of the people of India, and which is certainly very beneficial in a hot country like theirs. The Hebrew lawgiver also did not forbear to insert rules similar to these in the Hebrew books of law (Deut. xxiii. 12, 13).—DUBOIS.

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a virtuous one, and not without merit; but if he neglects any of them the offence will not go without punishment.

XIII. He will wash his feet and hands on the very spot with the water contained in the *chembu* which he brought. Then, taking the vessel in his right hand, and holding his private parts in his left hand, he will go to the stream to purify himself from the great defilement which he has contracted.

XIV. Arrived at the edge of the river or pond where he purposes to wash himself, he will first choose a suitable spot, and will then provide himself with some earth to be used along with the water in cleansing himself.

XV. He must be careful to provide himself with the proper kind of earth, and must remember that there are several kinds which cannot be used without committing an offence under these circumstances. Such are the earth of white-ant nests; salt-earth; potters' earth; road-dust; bleaching earth; earth taken from under trees, from temple enclosures, from cemeteries, from cattle pastures; earth that is almost white like ashes; earth thrown up from rat-holes and such like.

XVI. Provided with the proper kind of earth, he will approach the water but will not go into it. He will take some in his *chembu*. He will then go a little distance away and wash his feet and hands again. If he has not a brass vessel he will dig a little hole in the ground with his hands near the river-side and will fill it with water, which he will use in the same way, taking great care that this water shall not leak back into the river.

XVII. Taking a handful of earth in his left hand[1], he will

[1] It is only the left hand that may be used on these occasions. It would be thought unpardonably filthy to use the right hand. It is always the left hand that is used when anything dirty has to be done, such as blowing the nose, cleaning the ears, the eyes, &c. The right hand is generally used when any part of the body above the navel is touched, and the left hand below that. All Hindus are so habituated to this that one rarely sees them using the wrong hand. The custom of carefully washing the dirty part after answering a call of nature is strictly observed in every caste. The European habit of using paper is looked upon by all Hindus, without exception, as an utter abomination, and they never speak of it except with horror. There are some who even refuse to believe such a habit exists, and think it must be a libel invented out of hatred for Europeans. I am quite sure that when the natives talk amongst themselves of what they call our dirty, beastly habits, they never fail to put this at the head of them all, and to make it a subject of

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pour water on it and rub it well on the dirty part of his body. He will repeat the operation, using only half the amount of earth, and so on three times more, the amount of earth being lessened each time.

XVIII. After cleansing himself thus he will wash each of his hands five times with earth and water, beginning with the left hand.

XIX. He will wash his private parts once with water and potters' earth mixed.

XX. The same performance for his two feet, repeated five times for each foot, beginning, under the penalty of eternal damnation, with the right foot.

XXI. Having thus scoured the different parts of his body with earth and water he will wash them a second time with water only.

XXII. After that he will wash his face and rinse his mouth out eight times[1]. When he is doing this last act he must take very great care to spit out the water on his left side, for if by carelessness or otherwise he unfortunately spits it out on the other side, he will assuredly go to hell.

XXIII. He will think three times on Vishnu and will swallow a little water three times in doing so[2].

SECTION II.—*Rules to be observed when cleaning the teeth*[3].

I. To clean his teeth a Hindu must use a small twig cut from either an *uduga*, a *rengu*, or a *neradu* tree, or from one of a dozen others of which the names are given by the author.

bitter sarcasm and mockery. The sight of a foreigner spitting or blowing his nose into a handkerchief and then putting it into his pocket is enough to make them feel sick. According to their notions it is the politest thing in the world to go outside and blow one's nose with one's fingers and then to wipe them on a wall.—DUBOIS.

[1] It is necessary to rinse the mouth out after every action which is calculated to cause any defilement. The rule is to rinse the mouth out four times after making water, eight times after answering an ordinary call of nature, twelve times after taking food, and sixteen times after sexual intercourse. It is easy to recognize in this rule one of those wise ordinances of hygiene so appropriate to the climate and rendered obligatory by usage.—DUBOIS.

[2] This is called *achamania*.—ED.

[3] The practice of rinsing out the mouth and scrubbing the teeth well with a small piece of green wood freshly cut from the branch of a tree is very general, not only amongst Brahmins, but also amongst all other castes. Europeans, as a rule, are considered to neglect this practice so indispensable to cleanliness and comfort, and in consequence are still further de-

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II. If such a twig is unobtainable, he may use a bit of wood cut from any thorny or milky shrub.

III. Before cutting the twig he must repeat the following prayer to the gods of the woods: 'O gods of the woods! I cut one of your small twigs to cleanse my teeth. Grant me, for this action, long life, strength, honours, wit, many cattle and much wealth, prudence, judgement, memory, and power.'

IV. This prayer ended, he cuts a twig a few inches in length, and softens one end into the form of a painter's brush.

V. Squatting on his heels and facing either east or north, he scrubs all his teeth well with this brush, after which he rinses his mouth with fresh water.

VI. He must not indulge in this cleanly habit every day. He must abstain on the sixth, the eighth, the ninth, the eleventh, the fourteenth, and the last day of the moon, on the days of new and full moon, on the Tuesday in every week, on the day of the constellation under which he was born, on the day of the week and on the day of the month which correspond with those of his birth, at an eclipse, at the conjunction of the planets, at the equinoxes, the solstices, and other unlucky epochs, and also on the anniversary of the death of his father or mother.

VII. Any one who cleans his teeth with his bit of stick on any of the above-mentioned days will have hell as his portion!

VIII. He may, however, except on the day of the new moon and on the *ekadasi* (eleventh day of the moon), substitute grass or the leaves of a tree for this piece of wood.

IX. On the day of the new moon and on the *ekadasi* he may only clean his teeth with the leaves of the mango, the *juvi*, or the *nere*.

After having cleaned his teeth the Brahmin must direct his steps to some water to go through the important act of the *sandhya*[1].

spised on that account; while those Europeans who do clean their teeth are held to do so in such an objectionable manner as rather to add to the disgust which Hindus feel for those who are neglectful of this custom, because they use for this purpose a brush made with the bristles of a dead animal, and therefore impure, and also because they use the same brush many times, though it has after the first time been defiled by saliva — DUBOIS.

[1] The word *sandhya* answers to our word 'twilight'; it indicates the moment in the day when the sun reaches its apogee. Thus the *sandhya* must be performed three times a day, morning, noon, and evening.—DUBOIS.

Sandhya literally means 'meeting,' between day and night, that is.—ED.

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SECTION III.—*The First Part of the Sandhya. Rules to be observed by a Brahmin while washing.*

I. He performs the *sam-kalpa*, then calling to mind the gods of the waters, he worships them. He then thinks of the Ganges, and addresses the following prayer to the sacred river: "O Ganges! who were born in Brahma's pitcher, whence you descended in streams on to Siva's hair, from Siva's hair to Vishnu's feet, and thence flowed on to the earth to wash out the sins of all men, to purify them and promote their happiness! You are the stay and support of all living creatures here below! I think of you, and it is in my mind to bathe in your sacred waters. Deign to blot out my sins and deliver me from all evil.'

II. This prayer ended, he must think of the seven sacred rivers (the Ganges, the Jumna, the Indus, the Gódávari, the Sarasvati, the Nerbudda, and the Cauvery). Then plunging into the water, he fixes his thoughts intently on the Ganges, and imagines that he is really bathing in that river.

III. His ablutions finished, he turns towards the sun, takes water in his hands three times, and makes a libation to the sun by letting the water run off the tips of his fingers.

IV. He then leaves the water, girds up his loins with a pure cloth, and puts another on his shoulders. He sits down with his face to the east, fills his brass vessel with water, which he places in front of him, rubs his forehead with the ashes of cow-dung or sandalwood, and traces on it the red mark called *tiloki* according to the custom of his caste. He ends by hanging either a wreath of flowers round his neck, or else a string of seeds called *rudrakshas*.

V. He thinks of Vishnu, and in honour of him drinks three times a little of the water contained in the vessel. He also makes three libations to the sun by pouring water on the ground.

VI. Similar libations are made in honour of the gods Vishnu, Siva, Brahma, Indra, Agni, Yama, Neiruta, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera, Isana, the air, the earth, and all the gods in general, mentioning those by name which occur to his memory.

VII. Then he rises, pronouncing aloud the name of the sun,

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and worshipping him. He then meditates some time on Vishnu, and repeats the prescribed form of prayer in his honour[1].

VIII. He again repeats the names of the gods, turning round the while, and ends by making them a profound bow.

IX. Thinking once again of the sun, he addresses the following prayer to him:—

'O sun-god! You are Brahma at your rising, Rudra at noon, and Vishnu when setting. You are the jewel of the air, the king of the day, the witness of everything that takes place on earth; you are the eye of the world, the measurer of time; you order the day and night, the weeks, the months, the years, the cycles, the *kalpas*, the *yugas*, the seasons, the *ayanas*, the times of ablution and of prayer. You are lord of the nine planets; you absolve the sins of those who pray to you and offer you sacrifices. Darkness flies at your approach. In the space of sixty *ghatikas* (twenty-four minutes) you ride mounted in your chariot over the great mountain of the North, which is ninety million five hundred and ten thousand *yojanas* in extent. I worship you with all my strength; deign in your mercy to put away all my sins.'

X. Hereupon he turns round and round, twelve, twenty-four, or forty-eight times according as he is able, in honour of the sun.

XI. He then goes to a sacred fig-tree, and with his face towards the east makes it a profound inclination, repeating the following prayer the while: 'O *aswatta* tree! You are a god! You are the king of trees! Your roots represent Brahma, your trunk Siva, your branches Vishnu. Thus are you the emblem of the Trimurti. All those who honour you in this world by performing to you the ceremony of the *upanayana* or of marriage[2], by walking round about you, by adoring you and singing your praises, or by other similar acts, will obtain remission of their sins in this world and a home of bliss in the next. Penetrated with the consciousness of these truths I praise and adore you with all my strength. Deign to give me a proof of your goodness by vouchsafing the pardon of my sins in this world, and a place with the blessed after death.'

[1] Details of this will be found in the second part of the *sandhya*.

[2] It will be seen in the following pages that this tree is given in marriage with all due solemnity.—DUBOIS.

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XII. He then walks round the tree seven, fourteen, twenty-one, twenty-eight, thirty-five, or more times, according as he has strength, always increasing the number by seven.

XIII. He then reads some devotional book for a certain time, and having finished he rises, clothes himself with pure cloths, plucks a few flowers to offer to his household gods, fills his copper vase with water, and returns to his house.

SECTION IV.—*A Brahmin's daily avocations.*

I. On returning to his house the Brahmin *Grahastha* makes the sacrifice of *homam*, and may then attend to his ordinary affairs.

II. Towards noon, after having ordered his meal, he returns to the river to perform the *sandhya* for the second time, just as he did in the morning, the prayers only being different.

III. He returns home, taking the greatest care to remain undefiled, and avoiding with scrupulous anxiety the touch of anything on the road that might defile him. For instance, he would have to return promptly to the river if by any accident he set foot on a piece of broken glass or pottery, a bit of rag, hair, or a piece of skin, &c., or if he was touched by a person of inferior caste. It is necessary for him to preserve the most absolute purity to be able to perform the sacrifice which he is about to make.

IV. On his return to his house he proceeds with the daily sacrifice due to his household gods. Everything being ready for this important ceremony, he turns towards the east or towards the north, and remains some time in deep meditation. Taking a position below the divinity, he places the flowers he brought as an offering to the right of the god to whom he is going to do *puja*. Before him is placed a vessel full of water, also incense, a lamp, sandalwood, cooked rice, and other things of which the sacrifice is to be composed.

V. He first drives away the giants and evil spirits by snapping his fingers ten times, and turning round and round. By these means he prevents their approach.

VI. He then sets to work to provide himself with a new body, beginning with these words: 'I myself am the divinity to whom I am about to offer sacrifice.' By virtue of these words

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he unites the individual soul which reposes in his navel with the supreme soul which reposes in his breast. In the same way he unites successively the different elements of which he is made, the earth to the water, the water to the fire, the fire to the wind, the wind to the air.

VII. He presses the right nostril with his thumb and repeats the monosyllable *jon* sixteen times, and breathing heavily through the left nostril he thereby dries up the body which forms his mortal tenement.

VIII. With his thumb and first finger he closes both nostrils, repeats the word *ron* six times, holds his breath, thinks of fire; and by this means burns his body.

IX. He repeats the word *lom* thirty-two times, blowing hard all the time through his right nostril. He thus blows away the body which has just been burned. He must think of a new set of senses, and the thought will of itself suffice to procure them for him.

X. Then thinking of water, he causes the *amrita* to fall from the moon by pronouncing the sacred word *aum*. He diffuses this *amrita* over the whole of his body, which then becomes resuscitated.

XI. Finally, while saying the word *jom* he thinks of the elements of which he is composed, and arranges them in order, in the place of those he has just got rid of.

XII. He again repeats: 'I am myself the divinity to whom I am about to do sacrifice.' He then brings back to his navel the individual soul which had been incorporated in the supreme soul, after which, putting his right hand on his head, he says: 'Glory to the Penitent Narada!' and he imagines that this Penitent is then resting on his head. Placing his hands on the vessel of water beside him he evokes upon it the *mantra gayatri*. Finally, he lays his hand on his chest, and Vishnu is at once there. He finishes by saying the letters of the alphabet over the new and perfectly pure body which he has just made for himself.

After this preparatory ceremony, called *santi-yoga*, he does *puja* to his household gods. He may also do it, over the little stone *salagrama*, to all kinds of gods. This is indeed the most perfect form of worship. But he may also do it over a vessel full of water.

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XIII. He then sits down to his meal. If his means allow of it he should not fail to invite daily as many poor Brahmins as possible to this repast.

XIV. He eats in silence, but he does not begin until he has carefully put on one side for his departed ancestors a small portion of the rice and other dishes prepared for him.

The following are the principal rules which he is enjoined to observe while taking his meal; but for the most part they are neglected:—

After his food has been served the Brahmin pours a little water round the food, then traces a square patch with a thin stream of water, puts a little rice in the middle, and says: 'Glory to Narayana!' sprinkling over it a few drops of water. He also places a little rice on each of the corners of the square, saying successively: 'Glory to Vishnu! Glory to the god of evil spirits (Siva)! Glory to the god of the earth (Brahma)! Glory to the earth!' repeating each time, 'I offer him this rice.' On the rice that he is going to eat he places either some leaves of the *tulasi*[1], or a few of the flowers that he offered in the preceding sacrifice. He then traces a circular patch with a thin stream of water, and puts some rice in the centre. This is an offering to the evil spirits.

Pouring a little water into the hollow of his hand, he drinks it as a foundation for the meal he is about to make. He takes a little rice soaked in melted butter and puts it into his mouth, saying: 'Glory to the wind which dwells in the chest!' At the second mouthful, 'Glory to the wind which dwells in the face!' At the third, 'Glory to the wind which dwells in the throat!' At the fourth, 'Glory to the wind which dwells in the whole body!' At the fifth, 'Glory to those noisy ebullitions which escape above and below!'

Sannyasis, penitents, and widows may not eat anything in the evening. Should they do so they would be guilty of a crime equal to that of killing a Brahmin. The most minute attention must be paid to food; but the chief point, and the most laudable without doubt, is to see that the cooking is done with perfect cleanliness. This duty generally devolves on the women, though most Brahmins pride themselves on being good cooks. The room set apart for cooking operations is, as far as possible, the

[1] The basil plant, *Ocimum sanctum*.—ED.

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most retired room in the house, so that strangers, and particularly Sudras, may not be able to look in, as that would defile the earthen vessels. The spot must be well purified to begin with by rubbing the floor over with cow-dung mixed with water. The clothing of the persons who do the work must have been freshly washed.

The Brahmin being seated on the ground, his wife places a banana leaf in front of him, or the leaves of other trees sewn together to serve as plates. She pours a few drops of water on them, and then helps the rice, putting the other dishes on each side. To flavour the rice they pour upon it melted butter, for which Brahmins have a particular fondness, or they flavour it with a kind of sauce so highly spiced that no European palate could stand its pungency. Everything is helped as well as eaten with the fingers only. Should however the dishes be very hot the wife may use a wooden spoon so as not to burn herself.

When a Brahmin or any other Hindu eats, those whom he has invited are allowed to be present. As a rule it is considered the height of rudeness to look at any one who is eating, and Hindus who are obliged when travelling to take their meals in rest-houses, or under trees, are very careful to hang up screens round the place where they eat so as not to be seen.

As soon as the husband has finished his meal the wife takes hers on the same plate, upon which, as a proof of his affection for her, the husband will leave a few scraps. She, for her part, will show no repugnance at eating the fragments that he has left. The following story, which I read in some Indian book, illustrates this:—

'An old Brahmin was so badly attacked by leprosy that one day a joint of one of his fingers dropped off while he was eating, and fell on his leaf-plate. When his wife's turn came to take her food, she contented herself with simply putting this piece of finger on one side, and ate up the remains that her husband had left without showing the smallest repugnance. The Brahmin, who was watching her, was so delighted with such a proof of her devotion that, after overwhelming her with praise, he asked her what she would like as a reward. 'Alas!' she said in a melancholy tone, 'what reward can I hope for? I am young and childless, and perhaps soon I may find myself

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one of the hated and despised class of widows!' 'No,' answered the Brahmin, 'you shall not go unrewarded. I will arrange for your happiness.' Accordingly the Brahmin, being a holy man and much beloved by the gods, in spite of his leprosy, was granted the favour of re-incarnation and was allowed to live with his wife as long as she and he desired. In the enjoyment of abundant riches, and of all the gifts that nature can bestow, they saw three generations pass away, being reborn each time they reached the ordinary term of human life. Moreover as a climax to their happiness they had numerous children with each new life. At last, tired of this life, they both died, and were transported to the *Sattya-loka* or paradise of Brahma.' But to return to our subject.

XV. His meal over, the Brahmin washes his hands and rinses his mouth. He must also gargle his throat twelve times.

XVI. He takes some leaves of the *tulasi* which he had offered before his meal to his household gods, and bringing to his mind the thought of either the penitent Agastya or the giant Kumbhakarna he swallows these leaves, by doing which he ensures a good digestion for the meal just eaten and wards off any illness [1].

XVII. He gives betel and areca-nut to the poor Brahmins invited to dinner and dismisses them. He then spends some time reading devotional books.

XVIII. His reading finished, he puts some betel into his mouth, and is then free to look after his ordinary business or to go and see his friends, taking care all the time not to covet either the goods or the wives of others.

XIX. Towards sunset he returns for the third time to the river and performs the evening *sandhya*, repeating the ceremonies of the morning and midday.

XX. On his return home he performs the *homam* for the second time, and reads some Puranas. He again goes through the *hari-smarana*, which, as we have already described, consists in reciting the litanies to Vishnu and pronouncing his thousand names aloud.

XXI. He then visits the temple nearest to his house, but he

[1] Agastya is the dwarf Rishi, who is said to have swallowed the ocean in three gulps. Kumbhakarna is a giant famous for his voracious appetite.—ED.

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must never present himself there empty-handed. He must take as an offering either oil for the lamp, cocoanuts, bananas, camphor, or incense, &c., of which the sacrifices are composed. If he is very poor he must at least bring some betel leaves.

XXII. If the temple is dedicated to Vigneshwara (Pillayar) he walks round it once, after which, turning towards the god, he takes the lobe of his left ear in his right hand and the lobe of his right ear in his left hand, and in this position squats down on his heels three times; he then strikes himself gently on both his temples. If the shrine is dedicated to Siva he walks round it twice, and three times if it is consecrated to Vishnu.

XXIII. Having performed his religious duties he returns home, takes his evening meal, observing the usual ceremonies, and goes to bed soon afterwards. A Brahmin must purify the place where he is going to sleep by rubbing it over with cow-dung, and he must manage so that the place cannot be overlooked by any one.

A Brahmin must never sleep on a mountain, in a graveyard, in a temple, in any place where they do *puja*, in any place dedicated to evil spirits, under the shadow of a tree, on ground that has been tilled, in a cowshed, in the house of his *guru*, in any spot that is higher than that where the image of some god happens to be, any place where there happens to be ashes, holes made by rats, or where snakes generally live. He must also take care not to spend the night in houses where the servants are insolent, for fear of some accident.

A Brahmin puts a vessel full of water and a weapon near where he lays his head. He rubs his feet, washes his mouth twice, and then lies down.

A Brahmin must never go to bed with his feet wet, nor sleep under the beam which supports the roof of the house[1]. He must avoid sleeping with his face turned to the west or north. If it is impossible to arrange it otherwise it would be better to be turned towards the north than towards the west. When lying down he offers worship to the earth, to Vishnu, to Nandikeswara, one of the chief spirits who guard Siva, and to the bird *garuda* (Brahminy kite), to whom he makes the following prayers:—

[1] This is said to be a necessary precaution, as on these beams snakes are often to be found.—ED.

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'Illustrious son of Kasyapa and Vinata! king of birds, with beauteous wings and sharp-pointed beak; you who are the enemy of snakes, preserve me from their poison!'

He who repeats this prayer when he goes to bed, when he rises, and after his ablutions, will never be bitten by a snake. Here is another and most efficacious prayer which they are supposed to make a rule of saying before going to bed. It bears the name of *kalasa*, and is addressed to those evil spirits, Siva's guardians. While repeating it the right hand must be placed over the various parts of the body as they are mentioned:—

'May my head be preserved from all accidents by Bhairava, my forehead by Bishana, my ears by Bhuta Karma, my face by Preta-Vahana, my thighs by Bhuta Karta, my shoulders by the Ditis who are endowed with supernatural strength, my hands by Kapalini who wears round his neck a chaplet of human skulls, my chest by Santa, my belly, lips, and two sides by Ketrika, the back of my body by Kadrupala, my navel by Kshetraja, my sexual organs by Vatu, my ankles by Siddha Vatu, and the rest of my body from my head to my feet by Surakara, my body to my waist by Vidatta, and from below my waist by Yama! May the fire which receives the worship of all the gods preserve me from all evil in whatever place I may happen to be! May the wives of the demons watch over my children, my cattle, my horses, my elephants! May Vishnu watch over my country, and may the God who takes care of all things also take care of me, particularly when I find myself in some place which is not under the protection of my divinity!'

Whoever recites this prayer every evening when going to bed will come to no harm. It suffices to wear it on the arm, to write it, and to read it, to become rich and live happily.

XXIV. Finally, the Brahmin must again think of Vishnu, and this should be his last thought before sleeping.

Section V.—*Second Part of the Sandhya. Mantrams or Prayers, according to the Yagur Veda ritual.*

If for any reason the Brahmin *Grahastha* is unable to perform the ablutions that form part of the first part of the *sandhya*, he must at any rate try to accomplish the second part by atten-

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tively and devoutly repeating the prayers that belong to it. He first stands with his face to the east or towards the sun. He begins by knotting the little lock of hair which grows on the top of his head, then he takes a little *darbha* grass in his left hand, and in his right hand a larger quantity which he cuts to the length of his palm.

The Morning Sandhya.

He begins his religious exercises with the following prayer:—

Apavitraha pavitrova sarva vastam,
Gatopiva yassmaret pundareekaksham,
Sabahiabhian tara suchihy.

This means: 'Whether a man be pure or impure, or in whatsoever station in life he may find himself, if he thinks of him who has eyes like the lotus[1] he shall be pure within and without.'

He then prays to the water in the following words: —

'Water of the sea, of the rivers, of tanks, of wells, and of any other place whatsoever, hear favourably my prayers and vows! As the traveller, fatigued with the heat, finds rest and comfort under a tree's shade, so may I find in you solace and assistance in all my ills, and pardon for all my sins!

'O Water! you are the eye of sacrifice and battle! You have an agreeable flavour; you have the bowels of a mother for us, and all her feelings towards us! I call upon you with the same confidence with which a child at the approach of danger flies to the arms of a loving mother. Cleanse me from my sins, and all other men of their sins. O Water! at the time of the Flood Brahma the omniscient, whose name is spelt with one letter, existed alone, and existed under your form. This Brahma brooding over you and mingling with you[2] did penance, and by the merits of his penance created night. The waters which covered the earth were drawn into one place and formed the sea. Out of the sea were created the day, the years, the sun, the moon, and Brahma with his four countenances. Brahma created anew the firmament, the earth, the air, the

[1] That is, Vishnu.

[2] These words recall the words of the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis.—Dubois.

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smaller worlds, and everything that was in existence before the Flood.'

This prayer ended, the Brahmin sprinkles a few drops of water on his head from three stalks of the sacred *darbha* grass.

Whoever in the morning shall address these prayers to water, and shall be duly impressed with their import, will surely receive remission of his sins.

Then clasping his hands, the Brahmin says:—

'Vishnu! your eyes are like a flower! I offer you my worship. Pardon my sins; I perform the *sandhya* to keep my good name and dignity as a Brahmin.' He then recalls to mind the names of the greater and lesser worlds and the divinities who inhabit them, particularly the fire, the wind, and the sun, also Brihaspati, Indra, and the gods of the earth.

After that he puts his right hand on his head, and recalls to his memory the names of Brahma, of the wind, and of the sun. He then shuts his eyes, and at the same time closing his right nostril with his thumb, he invokes the god Brahma in these words:—

'Come, Brahma, come to my navel, and stay, stay there a long time.'

He then fancies to himself that this powerful god is seated on his navel; that the deity is red in colour, having four faces and two arms, a cord round his waist, holding a pitcher in his hand, riding on a goose, and accompanied by a multitude of divinities. He then thinks of him as having had no beginning, as possessing the key to all knowledge and being able to grant all the desires of mankind, and especially as the head *guru* of Brahmins, endowed with the fullest power to purify and sanctify them; finally as the Creator of all things, and as an eternal being. After which he says:—

'Glory to the earth! Glory to the greater worlds[1]!' (These he mentions by name, and thinks of them as all lighted by the sun.) 'May my heart and my will be drawn to the path of virtue; may my desires be fulfilled in this life and in the next.

[1] There are seven greater worlds, the names of which are Bhu, Bhuvar, Svar, Mahar, Janar, Tapah, Sattya. The first is the earth, the last the paradise of Brahma. They always add the word *loka*, which means a place (*locus*).—ED.

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To you, Brahma, who have created water, light, *amritam*, &c., to you I offer adoration.'

This prayer finished, he breathes heavily through his left nostril, and thereby puts to flight all the sins contained in his body. Then, closing the left nostril with either the thumb or the middle finger of the right hand, he thinks of Vishnu, whom he addresses in these terms:—

'Come, Vishnu, come to my chest, and stay there, stay there, stay there a long time.'

He then fancies Vishnu seated on his chest. This god is brown in colour, he has four arms, he carries a shell in one hand, the weapon called *sankha* in another, in the third a *chakra*, and in the fourth a lotus. He rides on the bird of prey *garuda*. The Brahmin thinks of him as omnipresent in the fourteen worlds and upholding everything by his power. Then he says:—

'Glory to the lesser worlds[1]!' (These he mentions by their names.) 'I think of them, of water, and of *amritam*.'

By virtue of this prayer all his sins are blotted out.

He then thinks of Siva, whom he invokes as follows:—

'Come, Siva, come to my forehead! Stay, stay, stay there a long time.'

He imagines Siva seated on his forehead. This god is white; he carries the *trisula* or trident in one hand, and a small drum in the other; on his forehead is a new moon. He has five faces, and each face has three eyes; he rides on an ox. He is represented further as the god self-creating and self-sufficient, as the universal destroyer. Then the Brahmin says:—

'Glory to all the lesser worlds!' (These he mentions by name.)

Then he adds, speaking to Siva: 'Destroyer of everything in the fourteen worlds, destroy my sins also.'

Whoever repeats this prayer, and makes the foregoing meditation, will assuredly obtain pardon of all his sins and be saved. However, as men are liable to fall into innumerable sins, they can hardly do too much to ensure their being

[1] There are seven lesser worlds, the names of which are Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala. Talatala. Mahatala, Patala. The last is the infernal regions, the lowest of all.—ED.

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forgiven, and the stain of their wickedness removed. The Brahmin therefore addresses the following prayer to the sun:—

'O sun! who art prayer itself and the god of prayer: forgive me all the sins that I have committed while praying, all those that I have committed during the night by thought, word, and deed; forgive me all those that I have committed against my neighbour by slander or false witness, by violating or seducing another man's wife, by eating forbidden food, by receiving presents from a man of low caste, in a word, all sins of any kind into which I may have fallen by night or by day.'

Whoever addresses this prayer to the sun, and is filled with the conviction of what he is saying and performs the *achamania* at the same time, will be absolved from all his sins and will go after his death to the abode of the sun.

To perform the *achamania* he must hold some water in the hollow of his right hand, and put it three times to his mouth. He must touch the under part of his nose with the back of his thumb; then joining his thumb and first finger together he must touch both his eyes, then joining all the other fingers together to his thumb he must touch his ears, his navel, his chest, his head, and both shoulders. And before putting the water to his mouth he must always be careful to purify it by repeating over it the following prayer: 'Water! you are of a good taste,' &c., as mentioned before. Passing his hand three times above his head he lets fall a few drops of water on it, and then thrice pours a little on the ground. He draws a long breath, and thus ejects all the sins in his body. He must then recite the prayer which begins with the words: O water! at the time of the Flood,' &c., as cited above.

Water should be looked upon as the Supreme Being, and as such adoration is offered to it. Nothing is more efficacious than water to cleanse men from their sins. Therefore one cannot perform one's daily ablutions too often; or at least touch water and think of it, and so obtain a remission of sin. After having thus worshipped, the Brahmin draws a little water into his nostrils, and then shoots it out again. With this water the sinful man also falls to the ground and is crushed under the left heel. Then turning to the east, the Brahmin stands on tiptoe. Raising slightly his hands, the palms turned towards heaven, he makes the following prayer to the sun:—

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'O Sun! fire is born of you, and from you the gods derive their splendour; you are the eye of the world and the light of it!'

Nothing is more efficacious than this prayer, accompanied by adorations, for turning aside anything that may bring sorrow, or sin, or pain, and for protection against untoward accident. He must add, still addressing the sun:—

'Glory to Brahma, Supreme Being! Glory to the Brahmins! Glory to the Penitents! Glory to the gods! Glory to the Vedas! Glory to Vishnu! Glory to the winds!'

While reciting this prayer he offers the *tarpana*, that is, a libation of water, to such of these gods as he names and to all the gods in general. He puts under his feet a stalk of *darbha* grass, and standing upright, on one foot if possible, he recites the famous *gayatri mantram*, which is as follows[1]:—

'Come, goddess, come and make me happy. You who are the voice of Brahma, whose name is formed of three letters; who are the mother of the Vedas, who are also the mother of Brahma; I offer you my adoration.' He who thus invokes the goddess *gayatri* three times a day will thereby be purified from all his sins.

He then pronounces the monosyllable *aum*, and cracks his fingers ten times while turning round. This is to scare away giants and evil spirits. He must then think again of the goddess *gayatri*. In the morning he must picture her to himself as a young girl of extraordinary beauty, resembling Brahma in appearance, riding on a goose, holding in her hand a stalk of *darbha* grass, dwelling in the sun's face and in the ritual of the Yajur Veda. Having thus pictured her in his mind, he prostrates himself before her.

He then addresses Vishnu in these words: 'Vishnu! your eyes are like a flower,' &c., as before.

To recite the *gayatri* without having previously offered homage to Vishnu would be labour lost. Such a lapse would indeed be a source of sin. They count on their fingers the

[1] The *gayatri mantram*, as we have already observed, is the most sacred, the most sublime, the most meritorious, and the most efficacious of all the *mantrams* of the Brahmins. They have deified this prayer, until they have come to look upon it not only as a *mantram*, but as an actual goddess itself.—DUBOIS.

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number of times that they recite the *gayatri*. The hands should be held aloft and covered over with a cloth, so that no one can see how many repetitions have been made. They say it in a low voice so that no one can hear them. The following is the text of this sublime prayer:—

'*Aum!* Glory to Patala! Glory to the Earth! Glory to Swarga! I think of the splendid light of the Sun. May he deign to turn my heart and my soul towards the path of virtue, and to the blessings of this world and of the next[1]!'

Every Brahmin ought to recite this *mantram* from a thousand to ten thousand times daily. He may, if self-indulgent, repeat it only a hundred or even only twenty times, but in no case less than eight times.

It is by virtue of this prayer that Brahmins become like Brahma, and after their death share his happiness. It is so extremely efficacious that its fervent repetition will blot out the most heinous sins, such for instance as having killed a Brahmin or a pregnant woman, drunk intoxicating liquors, or betrayed one's most intimate friend, &c. The Brahmin then dismisses the goddess in these terms:—

'I have prayed to you, O illustrious goddess, to obtain remission of my sins. Forgive me them, and grant that after my death I may enjoy the delights of Vaikuntha. You have Brahma's face; you are Brahma himself. It is you who have created, who preserve, and who destroy everything. Grant that I may be happy in this world, that joy, wealth, and prosperity may always be my portion, and that after my death my lot may be still happier and more lasting! Return, O goddess, after having granted me this favour, return to your usual dwelling-place!'

[1] This form does not seem to agree altogether with the original text given in the chapter on *mantrams*. I think the explanation is that there are several forms of *gayatri* which vary according to the Vedas from which they are taken.—DUBOIS.

One would think from the Abbé's description of the *gayatri* that it was a meaningless *mantram*, but the Hindus assert that in it is summed up their highest philosophy. The following is the text of the *gayatri*, with its translation:—

Aum, bhur, bhuvah, Suvah!
Aum, tat savitur Varenyam
Bhargo devasya dhimahi
Dhiyo yonah prachodayat.

Aum, earth, sky, heaven!
Aum, that excellent vivifier
The light divine, let us meditate upon.
Which (light) enlightens our understanding. ED.

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He offers her *tarpana*, or the libation of water, as also to the sun and to the planet Venus, saying:—

'Glory to the sun and to the planet Venus! May the water that I now offer you find favour in your sight!'

He finally addresses this prayer to fire:—

'O Fire! listen to what I am about to say! Burn my enemies, and those who speak evil of the Vedas! The number of my sins is like a sea of fire, without bottom and without shore, ready to consume me. I implore your mercy, and may it be to me a means of salvation!'

He then evokes Rudra (Siva), whose countenance is like that of time and of fire, and says to him:—

'You are the Veda, you are the truth! You are the Supreme Being! Your face is marvellous! You are the face of the world! I offer you adoration.' Then he says:—

'Glory to Brahma! Glory to water! Glory to the god Varuna! Glory to Vishnu!'

He offers the *tarpana* to each of these gods, and then to the sun, to whom he says:—

'Illustrious son of Kasyapa, you resemble a lovely flower! You are the enemy of darkness; through you all our sins are forgiven. I offer you my worship as to the greatest of gods; deign to receive it graciously.' Finally, he turns round three times in honour of the sun, and makes him a profound bow.

The Noonday Sandhya[1].

The Brahmin, having performed his ablutions and tied up the little lock of hair on the top of his head, traces one of the usual marks on his forehead, and turning towards the east, says:—

'Vishnu! the gods delight to look on the beauties of your dwelling-place; the sight charms them, they are never tired of beholding it, they open wide their eyes, the better to be able to contemplate it!'

Then, addressing the sun, he says: 'God of light! God of the day! You are the god of the planets and of all that has life; you are the god who purifies men and blots out all their transgressions, accept the worship that I offer to you!'

[1] This is really called *Madhya-Vandana*.—Ed.

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He then says:—

'Glory to the lesser worlds! Glory to Swarga! Glory to the earth! Glory to Maha-loka! Glory to Tapo-loka! Glory to Yama-loka! Glory to Sattya-loka! It is by the almighty power of the sun, the Supreme Being, that water, light, *amrita*, Brahma with the four faces, and everything that exists, have been created.'

Putting his left thumb on his right hand, he says:—

'May everything in me, be it good or bad, commendable or blameworthy, be purified by the sun, the Supreme Being!'

By virtue of this prayer his sins are *dried up*. Then, closing up both his nostrils, he carries his thoughts back to Krishna, the son of Nanda. This thought causes sin to tremble. He must picture sin to himself under the form of a black man with a horrible face. Then, putting his thumb to his left nostril, he recalls Siva, and says:—

'Siva, who are the chief of evil spirits, save me from punishment and put my sins to flight with your trident!'

Breathing strongly through his left nostril, he performs the *achamania*, and says:—

'The water purifies the earth; may the earth which has been purified by the water take away all the sins which I may have committed—by eating after another person, by partaking of forbidden food, by receiving gifts from a man of low caste or from a sinful person. I pray that the water may purify me from all sin, whatsoever it may be.' He performs the *achamania* twice more, for nothing washes away sin more surely than water. Every Brahmin should therefore perform *achamania*; for by this act alone not only will all his sins be remitted, even to the murder of a Brahmin or of a pregnant woman, but further it also makes him sinless for all time to come. He then takes three stalks of *darbha* grass, and sprinkles some drops of water on his head with it; but he must first purify the water by reciting over it the *gayatri* and the following *mantrams*:—'O water! who are spread on the bosom of the earth, grant that I may perform the *sandhya*, so that, being purified by it, I may perform *puja*!' 'O water! you have a good taste,' &c., and so on as before. He sprinkles some water with the three stalks of *darbha* grass, first on the earth and then on his head. He who in addition to the above recites the following prayer, may be

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assured that all his desires will be gratified, that he will live in the midst of plenty and be happy:—'O water! you are in everything that has life, in all quarters of the world, even on the tops of the highest mountains. You are of superlative excellence, you are the light, you are the *amrita*!' He then rises, and filling both his hands with water, pours it on the ground, saying:—

'Glory to Patala! Glory to the Earth! Glory to Swarga!' Then, turning to the sun, and raising his hands on high, he says:—

O Sun! you are the will of the gods, you are the opposite of water! You are the eye of the gods Mitra, Varuna, and of Fire; you shine in Swarga, on the earth, and everywhere!' He then repeats the prayer which begins with these words:—

'Glory to Brahma, the Supreme Being!' &c., and so on as before.

He places one or two stalks of *darbha* grass under his feet, and evokes the *gayatri* in these words:—

'Come, goddess, come and shower your favours upon me! You are the word of Brahma, the mother of the Vedas: it is from you that Brahma was born. I offer you *puja*! You are the mother of Brahmins. It is you who bear the engine of the world, and carry the weight thereof. It is through your protection that men live peacefully in the world, for by your care all evil, fear, and danger are kept far from them. It is through you that men become virtuous, and it is from you that *puja* derives its efficacy. You are eternal! Hasten, great goddess, and answer my prayer!'

It is by virtue of this prayer that the gods have attained to Swarga; that snakes penetrate into the bowels of the earth, and float in the midst of the waters; that fire possesses the power of burning; that Brahmins, grown like to the gods, merit daily to receive worship and sacrifice from other men in acknowledgement of their surpassing knowledge and virtue. He repeats the invocation to the sun, and purifies himself in pronouncing the sacred word *aum*. Then he performs the *vyahriti* in the following manner:—

'Glory to Patala!' (he puts his hands to his head).

'Glory to the Earth!' (he puts his hands on the tuft of hair on the top of his head).

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'Glory to Swarga!' (he touches himself all over his body).

Then he exclaims, '*Aum-bhatu!*' at the same time cracking his fingers ten times whilst turning round, and he stamps the ground with his left heel to scare away giants and evil spirits.

He evokes the *gayatri* afresh, whom now at noon he represents to himself under the image of Vishnu, in the prime of life, clothed in a golden robe, and dwelling in the sun's face. He then recites the *gayatri mantram* the proper number of times, exactly as before described, and then he dismisses the deity, saying:—

'You are born of Siva's face; you dwell in the bosom of Vishnu; you are known of Brahma; go, goddess, whither you will! You are Brahma, the Supreme Being; you receive the worship of Vishnu; you are the life of Brahmins; their fate is in your hands; it is in your power to give them happiness in this world and in the next; give me many children, and may I always have abundance of wealth. Illustrious mother! I have offered you *puja*; now depart whither it seemeth good!'

Nevertheless he says yet another prayer to her:—

'Divine wife of Narayana! preserve me from any pain in my head, face, tongue, nose, nostrils, ears, shoulders, thighs, feet, and in any part of my body; preserve me from pain day and night!'

He thus sings the *gayatri's* praises:—

'You are quick-witted; you are enlightenment itself; you are not subject to human passions; you are eternal; you are almighty; you are purity itself; you are the refuge and salvation of mankind; you are omniscient; you are the mother of all the Vedas, of which you are the emblem; you are also the emblem of prayer. It is to you that all sacrifices must be offered; all earthly blessings are at your disposal; in an instant you can destroy everything. Happiness and misery, joy and sorrow, hope and fear are in your hands; everything is dependent on you. All men pray to you, and at the same time your fascinations cast a spell over them. You fulfil all their desires, and overwhelm them with benefits; to you they owe success in all their undertakings; you put away their sins; you make them happy; you are present in all three worlds; you have three bodies and three faces, and the numeral three is of your very essence!'

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He who thus sings the *gayatri's* praises will receive his reward; all his sins will be forgiven.

Casting his eyes on liquefied butter, he says: 'O butter! you are the light; by your power everything shines; you are the friend of the gods; you form part of the sacrifices that are offered to them, you are the essence of these sacrifices!'

Then, addressing the *gayatri* anew, he says: 'You can be divided into two, three, and four parts; nothing can equal your brilliancy; I offer you *puja*!' He adds:—

'O goddess, who dwell on the mountains of the North, you are known to Brahma! Go now whither you will, you are the sacrificer of the sacrifice. It is you who offer it, it is you who receive it. It is you who regulate the offerings, it is you who make them, it is you who receive them; you have yielded the north-east to Siva, and you have taken up your abode in the north-west. If we enjoy light, it is you to whom we owe it, to you who have granted it to us that we may by its aid fulfil our religious duties!'

He addresses the fire in these words:—

'O fire! come here; I have need of you for *puja*; offer it yourself, since you are the emblem of it!'

He says to the water:—

'O water! remain on the earth, for the use of us who require you: remain that we may drink you, and come down abundantly to fertilize our land!'

Whoever repeats all these prayers at the midday *sandhya* will have all his wishes gratified and obtain pardon for all his sins.

He again addresses the *gayatri* as follows:—'I worship you, O goddess, under the image of Brahma. You are the mother of the world; Brahmins offer you *puja*, and in return enjoy your favours. You have the outward appearance of a stone; but you are indeed the creator, preserver, and destroyer of everything!'

He offers *arghya* to the sun. To this end he puts water and red flowers, some *darbha* grass, some sandalwood powder, and some mustard seed into a plated copper vessel. While mixing all these together, he says:—

'O sun! you are the most brilliant of all the stars! Vishnu borrows his splendour from you! You are pure and

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you purify men; I offer you worship! Glory to the sun! I offer him this *arghya*!'

Such, then, is the noonday *sandhya*. It is a religious exercise which must never be omitted, but if for any reason one fails to perform it, one must do penance before performing the evening *sandhya*. This penance consists in repeating the *gayatri* ten times, and offering *arghya* to the sun.

A Brahmin who does not perform the *sandhya* regularly is not permitted to fulfil any other act of religious worship. It would be quite fruitless for him to offer *puja*, or *sraddha* (the sacrifice for the dead), or to fast or to pray.

The inestimable advantages which the *gayatri mantram* procures are proportionate to the number of times it is repeated. Thus for a thousand repetitions you would obtain success in all your undertakings; for ten thousand, the forgiveness of sins and abundance of this world's goods; for twenty thousand, the spirit of wisdom and the gift of knowledge; for a hundred thousand, the supreme grace of becoming a Vishnu after death.'

It is considered most meritorious to solemnly undertake to recite the *gayatri* for a certain fixed time daily, the credit gained thereby being graduated according to the length of time devoted to the exercise. It depends, that is to say, on the choice that one makes of the three following periods: (1) from sunrise to sunset; (2) from sunrise to noon; and (3) at intervals of about three hours.

Any Brahmin who makes such a vow calls together a certain number of his fellow-Brahmins, and says in their presence:—

'To-day being such and such a day of such and such a month, I, so-and-so Brahmin, of such and such country and family, being desirous of averting all danger from myself, of growing in virtue, and of obtaining the delights of Swarga after my death, hereby call all present to witness that I vow to recite the *gayatri* every day from such an hour till such an hour.'

The Evening Sandhya.

Brahmins begin this *sandhya* about sunset, but it must not be performed on the day of the *sankranti*, that is to say, on the day that the sun moves from one sign of the Zodiac to another,

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nor on the days of the new and full moon, nor on the twelfth day of the moon, nor yet on the day on which one has offered the sacrifice for the dead called *sraddha.* To perform the evening *sandhya* under these circumstances would be committing a crime equal to the murder of a Brahmin. If a Brahmin has just lost his father, his mother, or one of his children; if his gums bleed, or if through a wound or accident any part of his body above the navel has been bleeding, or in a word if he finds that he is impure, he would commit an unpardonable sin by performing the evening *sandhya.* Indeed, in the last case he would lose all his possessions and his children. Except under these special circumstances, he must never neglect this religious duty, and he must carefully observe the following rules:—

He makes the usual ablutions. Then, turning to the north, he recalls the memory of Vishnu. He then thinks of Brahma and addresses the following prayer to him:—

'Brahma, you have four faces, you are my creator! Forgive me all the sins that I have committed. I am now beginning the evening *sandhya.* Deign to be present, and repose on my chest, and deliver me from my sins.'

He then recites the *mantram* which begins with these words:—'Glory to the lesser worlds!' and so on as before. Closing up both nostrils, he thinks of Vishnu, and imagines that he is resting on his navel, and says: 'Oh, Vishnu! you are of great stature and black in colour. You have four arms, you are the preserver of all that exists; destroy my sins.' He offers worship to the seven greater worlds, as in the morning *sandhya,* and again addressing Vishnu, he says: 'You have created light, *amrita,* and all that is used for the food of mankind. Preserve me, and preserve all that lives in the world!' Closing the right nostril with his finger, he breathes strongly through the left, and by this means burns all the sins that are in his body. Then he ejects them by breathing forcibly through the right nostril. He then directs his thoughts to Siva, the destroyer of sin and of all things, and imagines that he is resting on his forehead. He says to him: 'O Siva! you are white and tall. You have the mark of a half-moon on your forehead; you have three eyes; you destroy all things; you are the god of gods; I implore your protection, and offer you worship!' He once

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more offers *puja* to the different worlds, and destroys his sins by virtue of the following prayer:—'Oh, may my sins be destroyed by the almighty power of the sun and the fire!' He adds: 'O fire! you are prayer and the god of prayer. Forgive me all the mistakes I have made in the different *mantrams* that I have recited; and forgive me, besides, all the sins that I have this day committed in thought, word, and deed. May this water, which I drink from my uplifted hand, destroy everything bad and sinful that may be in me.' He performs the *achamania* as at the morning *sandhya*. He also inhales some purified water into his nostrils, as he did before, and recites the *mantram* which begins with the words: 'O water! at the time of the Flood,' &c., and so on, as before mentioned.

Then he ejects by a forcible expiration the water in his nostrils, which carries away the sinful man, whom he crushes at once upon a stone. He represents this man of sin to himself as a powerful being, of extraordinary strength, with a red belly, white hair and beard, and a hideous and distorted face[1].

He evokes the *gayatri*, and turning to the west, he says:—

'O god of the day, on whom depends the happiness of mankind, I offer the evening *sandhya*: deign to honour me with your presence! O goddess *gayatri*, who are the emblem of the Vedas and the word of Brahma, whose name is composed of three letters! I offer you *puja*; hasten hither that I may be happy!'

Whilst making this prayer his hands are spread open and raised towards heaven. He then rubs his hands together and puts them to his breast, believing in imagination that the *gayatri* is reposing there. He cracks his finger-joints ten times, and turns round at the same moment; and by that he closes

[1] Here is another portrait of a man of sin, culled from the *Sama-Veda*: 'The murder of a Brahmin forms the head of the man of sin; drinking intoxicating liquors, the eyes; theft, particularly of gold, the face; the murder of a *guru*, the ears; the murder of a woman, the nose; the murder of a cow, the shoulders; the rape of another man's wife, the chest; the wilful production of abortion, the neck; oppression of the innocent and just, the belly; ill treatment of any one who has sought protection, the stomach; to slander your *guru*, violate a virgin, betray a secret confided to you, or to be false to any one who has relied on you, these are the private parts and the thighs; and the hairs of these are the smaller sins. This man of sin is of gigantic stature, and has a horrible face; he is black, and has wild bright eyes; he delights in torturing mankind.' —DUBOIS.

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all places of egress, so that the goddess cannot depart. He pictures her to himself as an old woman, having Siva's face, riding on an ox, dwelling in the disk of the sun, and united to all the Vedas. Then he says:—

'Divine wife of Siva! you are the mother of all that is. I offer you *puja* at the approach of night, take me under your protection and save me! Come, *gayatri*, come and favourably hear my prayers!'

Whoever recites these words will obtain all that he asks for. Then, facing the north, with his arms hanging down, he recites the *gayatri mantram*, in the same manner and the same number of times as before. It is impossible to repeat this prayer too often in the evening, evening prayers being so much more efficacious than others. A Brahmin who daily recites this prayer uninterruptedly from sunset to midnight will by this pious exercise most assuredly place himself beyond the possibility of want or misery, and will ensure for himself a quiet and peaceful death, without sickness or pain, when his long and prosperous career shall draw to a close.

To dismiss the goddess *gayatri* he uses the same formulas as those of the noonday *sandhya*, and, after the *tarpana*, or libation of water, to the sun and the planet Venus, he addresses Siva in these words:—'O Rudra! protect me from all accident and danger as well by night as by day. You are the lord of the world; take me under your protection that nothing may hurt me or do me harm.' The prayer to fire follows; then he offers *tarpana* to the following gods, saying: 'Glory to Brahma! Glory to water! Glory to Varuna! Glory to Vishnu! Glory to Rudra!' While offering *arghya* to the sun, he says: 'God of light, god of the day! I offer you worship! Receive the *arghya* that I now present to you, and deliver me from the cares and dangers of the world!'

Conclusion.

'I will conclude,' the author goes on to say, 'by explaining what the *sandhya* is, and on what occasions it should be offered.

'Brahma, the author and father of the Vedas, wishing to extract the essence of them, composed the *sandhya*, which is in respect to the other Vedas what butter is to milk, or what gold

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is compared with the other metals. In short, as honey is the quintessence of flowers, so the *sandhya* is the quintessence of the Vedas.

'And as the *sandhya* is all that is most sublime in the Vedas, so is the *gayatri* all that is most sublime in the *sandhya*. This celebrated prayer obtains for mankind the remission of their sins, plenty, joy, wealth, health, and also ensures their happiness hereafter.

'They must beware of teaching this prayer to the degraded Sudras. Whoever dared to do so would assuredly go to the infernal regions—he, his father, and his children; and if a Sudra happened to overhear a Brahmin repeating it he would inevitably go to the same place and remain there for all eternity.

'I have said it, and I repeat it,' says the author, 'let them beware of making it known to the Sudras, under pain of eternal damnation.

'No meditation, penance, sacrifice, knowledge, prayer, can compare in efficacy to the *gayatri mantram*. Its merits are superexcellent, but it must also be kept a profound secret. It was Brahma himself who composed it expressly for Brahmins.

'This is the idea which must be formed of the goddess *gayatri*. Though she appears under the form of a prayer, it must be recognized that she is the Supreme Being, and she must be worshipped as such. Brahma, who composed this *mantram*, taught it to Indra, who taught it to Yama; he in turn instructed Siva, who taught it to the Brahmins.'

Such are the prayers and ceremonials used by Brahmins when performing the three *sandhyas*, and such are the extravagant absurdities to which they are bound to conform.

The intense and mysterious solemnity with which they perform all this ceremonial is intended to persuade others that its end and object must be of the highest and most vital importance; the inner meaning being quite beyond the reach of the vulgar and ignorant. Every care is taken to strengthen this opinion; and they use the greatest precautions to exclude the searching eyes of educated persons.

Though assured of the blind credulity of the ignorant masses over whom they hold sway, they are well aware that, if ever the spell should be broken, their charlatanism and cupidity would

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stand revealed, and they would then become the laughing-stock of the public.

If the *sandhya* really represents the cream of the Vedas, I do not think that any European will regret the want of a wider acquaintance with these famous books. As an excuse for the fantastic folly of many of their religious performances Brahmins assert that some, if not all, are only allegories, of which the inner meaning is more rational. This may very likely be true; but I am fully persuaded that the tradition of this inner meaning has been lost. There are beyond question very few Brahmins who would be able to give even the most imperfect idea of what their rites were originally intended to convey. It is an undoubted fact that the greater number of them have nothing in their minds beyond the material and literal fulfilment of the ridiculous ceremonies which they are in the habit of performing. Take, for instance, their celebrated mysterious *gayatri*, of which each word, they aver, contains a hidden meaning—a meaning, however, which is interpreted in as many different ways as there are castes and sects[1].

The first four sections of this chapter are taken from the *Nitya Karma*, or Brahminical ritual. I was acquainted with the second part of the *sandhya* when I first compiled this work; I had read a full description of its details in a little manuscript of M. Pons, formerly a Jesuit missionary in the Carnatic, who died about eighty years ago. He had travelled all over Southern India, and was a good Sanskrit scholar, having written a grammar of that language. But the particulars which this learned man gave appeared to me so extraordinary and so incredible, that I doubted their authenticity and did not venture to use them. I afterwards procured a book in Canara entitled *Purohita-Asrama-Karma*, or 'The Religious Observances of a Brahmin Purohita,' in which I found the same details in almost exactly the same words. I consulted some Brahmins on the subject, and they assured me that they were substantially correct, but that there were some *mantrams* and ceremonies mentioned which were not in use in the Southern Provinces, though they were

[1] A Hindu would contend that the fact of the hidden meaning of the *mantrams* having been lost does not make the *mantrams* absurd, but only those who perform the ceremonies without understanding their meaning. —ED.

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used in the north. Indeed I was assured the ceremonial and *mantrams* vary slightly in different parts, according to the Veda and the sect of those that follow them. But, according to my informants, most Brahmins neglect and are even altogether ignorant of the greater part of them.

The Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas must also perform the *sandhya*; but it is not as obligatory for them, especially for Vaisyas, as it is for Brahmins. Furthermore, the *mantrams* and ceremonials of the latter are quite different, and not nearly so numerous.

The Jains also perform the *sandhya*. As for the Sudras, they can only make simple ablutions, without any prayers or ceremonies; but any one who wishes to be distinguished from the vulgar herd, and to be considered a more exalted person, rarely fails to perform the ablutions at least once a day. To see them one would never think that those who perform the *sandhya* are actuated in any way by a spirit of devotion. The Brahmin gets through all these ceremonies and repeats all these prayers as quickly as possible; he is like a schoolboy gabbling over a lesson he has learnt by heart; and this, like everything else, is all performed perfunctorily and as a duty to be discharged with all possible celerity.

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CHAPTER VIII

Brahminical Fasts.— The Custom of Rubbing the Head and Body with Oil.— The Over-indulgence of Brahmins.— Their Scrupulous Observance of Custom.— Reflections on this Subject.— Their *Samaradhanas*, or Public Feasts.— Sudra Feasts.

BRAHMINS are obliged to keep frequent and often prolonged fasts[1]. They are expected to accustom themselves to them as indispensable adjuncts of their religion from the day they assume the triple cord. Even old age, infirmity, or sickness, unless it be very serious, is not held to exempt them from these fasts.

On ordinary days the Brahmin *Grahastha* may take two meals; one after midday, and one before going to bed. But this rule has many exceptions. There are many days on which he is allowed to take only one meal, about three o'clock in the afternoon; and there are others when he may neither eat nor drink.

The days of the new and full moon are fast-days, as also the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth days of each lunar month, which are called the *ekadasi vrata*; on the tenth and twelfth days one meal may be taken, on the eleventh day, called *ekadasi*, no meal at all is allowed. To fast on these three days has a special merit[2].

[1] One is perpetually struck by the numerous points of resemblance between the manners and customs of modern Brahmins and those of the Pharisees, with which we have become acquainted through the Holy Scriptures. Their lives are full of the same affectations, they share the same dread of defilement, there are the same continual ablutions and bathings, the same scrupulous attention to the outward observance of the law, the same frequent fasts, &c.; but all this is tainted by overweening pride, ostentation, and hypocrisy. What St. Matthew says of this sect (xxiii. 27) might certainly be applied without injustice to the Brahmins of India.—DUBOIS.

[2] The eleventh day is the only strict fast-day, and it is observed only by old and religiously disposed Brahmins and widows. The Madhva Brahmins observe the fast more scrupulously than others nowadays.—ED.

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As the fast which is kept on the eleventh day of each lunar month is observed with particular solemnity, I will give a few details of it in an appendix[1].

The thirteenth day of the moon is an unlucky day. Brahmins must eat nothing on that day till sunset[2]. In the evening, before taking their food, they offer *puja* to Siva, to propitiate him, and then begin to eat.

The feast called *Sivaratri* (or 'Siva's Night') falls on the fourteenth day of the moon in the month of *Maga* (February), the origin and particulars of which will be seen in an appendix[3]. On that day no one must eat or drink, or even sleep, for the whole twenty-four hours. Every three hours during the day and night *puja* is offered to Siva, and not until the following day, after having performed the *sandhya*, are they at liberty to eat[4].

On the ninth day of the lunar month *Cheitra* (April), being the anniversary of the incarnation of the great god Vishnu in the person of Rama, Brahmins may take only one meal in the day, and that without rice; they may only eat peas, cakes, bananas, and cocoanuts[5].

On the eighth day of the month of *Sravana* (August), the day of Vishnu's incarnation in the person of Krishna, they are forbidden to take any food at all, and must give themselves up to works of piety. They make clay images of Krishna and his wife Rukmani, Satya Bhama, Bala-Badra, Rohini, Vasu-Deva, Nanda, Devaki. At midnight they offer *puja* to all these deities together, and for *neiveddya* they offer cocoanuts, bananas, coarse sugar, common peas, peaflour, milk, and cakes. The next day, after the *sandhya*, they can take their usual meals.

They must also fast on the anniversaries of the ten *Avatars* (incarnations) of Vishnu; on the days called *manuvadi*, *yugadi*, *sankranti*; on the days of eclipses; at the equinoxes, solstices, and the conjunction of planets, and other unlucky days; on the anniversary of the death of father or mother; on Sundays and several other days during the year.

[1] Appendix II.

[2] This fast is not generally observed nowadays.—ED.

[3] Appendix III.

[4] This festival is only observed by followers of Siva, and never by Vishnavites.—ED.

[5] This festival, though strictly speaking a Vishnavite festival, is also observed by ordinary Sivaites.—ED.

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On fast-days a man is not allowed to have intercourse with his wife; the women are forbidden to rub their bodies with powdered saffron and the men to anoint their heads with oil. Wednesday and Saturday are the only days in the week on which this cosmetic process may be indulged in with advantage. To anoint yourself on other days might produce serious consequences. For instance, if you anoint yourself on Sunday, you run the risk of catching all sorts of complaints; if on Monday, that of losing your personal attractions; if on Tuesday, you will shorten your life; and if on Friday, you will probably become overwhelmed with debts. Nevertheless, when the case is one of urgent necessity, they may anoint themselves on one of these days after taking certain precautions[1].

Whenever any one wishes to perform this operation, it is necessary first to think of Asvatthama, of Bhali Chakravarti, of Veda-Vyasa, of Hanumanta, of Vibhishana, of Krupacharia, and of Parasu-Rama. Dipping the tips of his fingers in the oil, the anointer must let seven drops fall on the ground, as a libation in honour of these seven personages. After that he may anoint his head in the usual manner[2].

This libation is considered rather important. The seven personages whose names have been mentioned are supposed to require oil to anoint their heads; it is only fair, therefore, to give them a few drops. They, on their side, from feelings of gratitude, grant long life and riches to whoever shows them this mark of respect.

But to return to the fasts. The Brahmins do not appear to feel the least inconvenience from enforced abstinence from food. Neither is it a great hardship to them, for from their early youth they are accustomed to eat nothing till after

[1] These customs are not very strictly observed nowadays.—ED.

[2] The custom of oiling the body was very common among the Jews. They considered it a healthy and cleanly habit. They anointed the hair and beard (Psalm cxxxiii. 2). At festivals or on days of public rejoicing they anointed either their whole bodies or else only the head or feet with unguents (St. Matthew vi. 17; St. Luke vii. 38; St. John xii. 3). They also anointed the dead (St. Mark xiv. 8, xvi. 1; St. Luke xxiii. 56). Their kings and high priests were anointed at their consecration. The vessels of the Tabernacle were also consecrated with holy oil (Exodus xxx. 26–28).—DUBOIS.

These semi-divine personages are called *Chiranjivis* in Sanskrit, literally "the long-lived."—ED.

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midday. Besides, on these days of mortification they take care to make up for the lateness of their meal by the large quantity they eat when once they begin. Habit has enabled Brahmins to overload their stomachs with most indigestible food, without feeling any discomfort or inconvenience. One often sees a Brahmin, after making a hearty meal of rice and liquefied butter, eat the whole of a huge jack-fruit[1], which would be enough to give ten Europeans violent indigestion.

These frequent fasts appear to form part of a dietary system which has been misinterpreted in a religious sense; or more probably they are due to a desire on the part of the Brahmins to attract public attention and respect by an ostentatious display of moderation. Be that as it may, gluttony may certainly be included among the numerous vices of the Brahmins. There is no limit to their appetite when they get the opportunity of indulging it, and such opportunities frequently occur, seeing that their numberless ceremonies always end with a feast; and on these occasions they make a point of gorging themselves to the utmost extent. There is no doubt that, in spite of their being accustomed to it, this habit of eating to excess would in the end be productive of disastrous consequences in a climate where moderation in all things must be the rule of life, if fasts enforced by custom did not give their stomachs a little rest from time to time.

If Brahmins can with a certain amount of justice reproach Europeans for intemperance in drinking, with no less justice can Europeans retort that Brahmins show great want of moderation in eating. Besides, drunkenness is not an habitual vice among respectable Europeans, and those who frequently give way to it are looked upon with contempt by their own countrymen; whereas Brahmins, who are the cream of Hindu society, and 'the gods of the earth,' are perfect slaves to their stomachs. Indeed the most revolting gluttony does not horrify them, and they even justify it under the cloak of religion. It is by no means uncommon for them to gorge themselves to such repletion that they are unable to rise from the place where they have been eating.

Far from being ashamed of this, they pretend that it is

[1] The tree which produces this is the *tijaca-marum* of Malabar. It is the largest fruit known, and is extremely indigestible.—DUBOIS.

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infinitely pleasing to the god Jivattma, that is to say, to *the principle of life*, which they have deified. The more liquefied butter and other food they can cram into their stomachs, the better the god Jivattma will be pleased. When they sit down to a feast it is curious to watch the preparations that are made so that nothing may hinder the full play of the appetite, and Jivattma be thoroughly satisfied. To prevent themselves from being inconvenienced in any way during this important operation of eating, they begin by taking off their turbans and clothes, sitting down to the feast almost naked. While eating they occasionally stroke their heads, their throats, their chests, and their stomachs, and rub these portions of their bodies in order, as it were, to help the food to descend more quickly into the abdominal regions. They never get up from a meal until it is absolutely impossible to swallow another morsel; and then, to alleviate the enormous amount of work their stomachs are put to, they swallow a piece of assafoetida, the aperient and sudorific qualities of which no doubt prevent the ill effects which would otherwise infallibly result from such excesses.

To fill one's stomach well is a very favourite expression amongst Hindus, and one you very often hear. Whenever they feast in another's house the host never fails to ask his guests if their stomachs are well filled. The first question that a Brahmin's wife and children ask on his return from a feast is, 'Have you filled your stomach well?' and it affords him the greatest pleasure to be able to answer, while he gently rubs that part of his person, 'My stomach is well filled.'

Hindus belonging to other castes which have the right to wear the triple cord also keep most of the Brahminical fasts, and so do even some Sudras who have not that privilege, but who wish to gain the respect and consideration of the public. When these days of mortification come round all manual labour is stopped, all outdoor work is suspended, the shops are closed, and workmen, artisans, and labourers give themselves and their cattle a rest. Fasts which recur so often naturally cause a considerable waste of time, but in a country where industry meets with so little encouragement this drawback is not much felt; and the indolent Hindu has generally more time on his hands than he requires to look after his business, which is never of a very pressing nature. It is indeed quite

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probable that their natural indolence and dislike for work of all kinds partly contributed to the institution of so many days of rest!

All these practices which the Hindu thinks himself called upon to observe are so overladen with fanciful and even ridiculous details that it is difficult to understand how any civilized people could have preserved them intact up to the present day. The Hindus, however, are so obstinately devoted to custom and precedent that no sensible person amongst them would think for a moment of trying to bring about a change. It is true that several of their modern philosophers, such as Vemana, Tiruvalluvar, Pattanattu-pillai, Agastya and others, have ridiculed such customs; yet they nevertheless recommend people to follow them, and themselves conform minutely to every observance[1].

Our Western religion, education, and manners are so diametrically opposed at all points to the religious and civil usages of the Hindus that they are naturally looked upon with a most unfavourable eye by the latter. In their opinion Europeans may almost be placed below the level of beasts, and even the more sensible among them cannot understand

[1] Amongst the few Hindu works which are written in a free philosophical vein, and in which the Hindu religion and its customs are openly criticized, not one that I know of has been written by a Brahmin. All the works of this kind that I have seen have emanated from authors who were not of this caste. Tiruvalluvar was a Pariah, Pattanattu-pillai and Agastya were both of the *Vellala* caste, and their poems are written in Tamil; Sarovignaimurti was a Lingayat, and his works are in Canarese. One of the most famous is Vemana, whose poems, originally written in Telugu, have since been translated into several other languages. We are told that this philosopher, who was of the *Reddy* caste, and was born in the district of Cuddapah, died towards the end of the seventeenth century. His writings, from which I have seen several extracts, appear to me to be most interesting, and are distinguished by much discernment and independence. It is to be noticed that the authors of all these satirical and revolutionary works belong to recent times. If in earlier days any enlightened writers published similar works, the Brahmins have taken care that not a trace of them shall remain. Nowadays they rage against the authors we have mentioned, and speak of their works with contempt. They cannot, of course, succeed in destroying them, but they do everything in their power to prevent the reading of them.—DUBOIS.

The last sentences of the Abbé's note are misleading, for these authors are held in great respect, and are much read by educated Brahmins. These latter must be distinguished from the purely priestly class of Brahmins, whose interest it may be to dissuade people from studying these works.—ED.

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how people, possessed in other ways of so many superior qualities, can conform in their everyday life to manners and customs which differ so radically from their own, and which, as a natural consequence, they consider most coarse and degraded.

The Brahmin rule of life is in appearance intolerably severe, but it has become for them a mere matter of habit encouraged by vanity and self-interest. Their punctiliousness in the fulfilment of their religious duties day by day, their self-denials and their fasts, form part of the business of their lives and are looked upon in the light of pastimes. They know, too, full well, that the eyes of the multitude are always on them, and the smallest relaxation of their discipline or the least negligence in any particular would put an end to the almost boundless veneration and respect with which the common people regard them. I have however met with Brahmins who were sufficiently reasonable to admit that many of their customs were opposed to all common sense, and that they only practised them out of consideration for their co-religionists. I know also that most of them evade the rules and absolve themselves without hesitation from the performance of very many of their trifling ceremonies when they are quite certain that these lapses will remain a profound secret. Thus, for example, there are very few who perform their ablutions more than once a day, or who strictly observe the prescribed fasts. To keep up appearances, to dazzle the eyes of the public, to avoid scandal, such are the limits of their pious zeal. Although in public they affect the utmost strictness, they are very much less particular in private life; and a well-known saying confirms this assertion: 'A real Brahmin in the *agrahara*[1], half a Brahmin when seen afar off, and a Sudra when entirely out of sight[2].'

It must be acknowledged, however, that they are very tenacious of these long-established customs. Any one who is believed to openly neglect them incurs severe censure and contempt, and also lays himself open to serious insults and annoyances. The *gurus* of the Brahmins keep a very watchful eye over the others. Those found guilty of a breach of discipline are not

[1] The name of villages entirely peopled by Brahmins.

[2] This is even more true nowadays than it was in the time of the Abbé, at any rate among the Brahmins educated on Western lines.—ED.

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always let off with severe reprimands publicly delivered. The saintly *gurus* rarely omit the imposition of a heavy fine, the amount of which is fixed by themselves.

The *purohitas* also are obliged, for the sake of example and to keep up appearances, to follow the Brahminical usages with the utmost strictness, even to the minutest details; but it is greatly to their interest to keep up all these practices, seeing that they form a never-failing source of profit.

The scrupulous exactitude of the Brahmins is particularly noticeable at the *samaradhanas*, or public feasts, to which they are often invited by persons of high degree, such as Rajahs, governors of provinces, and other high officials, or wealthy individuals who pride themselves on the enormous expense which their prodigality entails on these occasions. The dedication of a new temple, the inauguration of an idol, the celebration of a feast-day or of a marriage, the birth of an heir, &c., expiatory ceremonies for the sins of the departed to procure their admittance into the abode of bliss, votive ceremonies to ensure victory in time of war, to avert the evil effects of an unlucky constellation, or to obtain rain in time of drought, &c., &c.; one and all of these are opportunities for *samaradhanas*[1]. It is needless to add that the Brahmins who make their living out of these and similar practices insist very warmly on their being kept up, and place them in the foremost rank of meritorious actions. When a *samaradhana* is announced as about to take place, all, men and women, from seven or eight miles round, flock to it, sometimes to the number of over two thousand[2]. Each and all bring with them an appetite well calculated to do full justice to the hospitality of their entertainer. These gatherings are composed entirely of Brahmins, and as every one keeps his eye on his neighbour there is much rivalry as to who will show the greatest familiarity with the customs of their caste and the greatest zeal in carrying them out. An ancient Roman philosopher once said that he could not imagine how two augurs could meet without laughing in each other's faces. What would he have thought of the grave and serious

[1] The Jews had also their solemn feasts. Frequent mention is made of them in the Bible.—DUBOIS.

[2] There is a sarcastic Tamil proverb to the effect that 'a Brahmin will walk even a hundred miles for rice and dholl.'—ED.

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mien which Hindu soothsayers and impostors preserve under similar circumstances?

Seated on the ground in long rows, the women entirely separated from the men, they sing in turn while waiting for their food, either Sanskrit hymns in honour of their deities or love-songs. All those who are listening cry out as a mark of approval, '*Hara*! *Hara*! *Govinda*[1]!' though the greater number have probably understood nothing of what has been sung.

The giver of the entertainment is not permitted to eat with his guests unless he is himself a Brahmin. If he is of another caste he appears after the feast is finished, and prostrates himself humbly before these *gods of the earth* who have done him the honour to devour the food he has provided, and who in return give him their *asirvada* or blessing. If their host crowns the feast by a distribution of presents of cloth or money, their fulsome compliments will know no bounds, and they will exalt him even above their own deities. At this the host feels excessively flattered, thoroughly convinced that such an honour cannot be too dearly bought. I have already remarked that all Hindus are particularly susceptible to flattery. There is an entire caste called *Battus*, who are in a way flatterers by profession. Their only occupation in life is to grovel before people of position or importance, and to recite or sing before them verses composed in their honour, which are full to overflowing of the most extravagant eulogies. The most astonishing thing is that, instead of wounding the modesty and susceptibilities of those to whom they are addressed, these songs are received with complacency and looked upon as sincere tributes to undoubted merit, the author being handsomely rewarded for them.

Those who belong to the sects of Siva and Vishnu also have their *samaradhanas*, or public feasts, which are given by the wealthy among them[2]. As all the guests who crowd to these entertainments are Sudras, and for the most part low, uneducated people, the festivities are generally very noisy and disorderly,

[1] A style of acclamation. They are the names of Siva and Vishnu.—DUBOIS.

[2] This is untrue of Vishnavite Brahmins, for no two Vishnavite Brahmins will eat together unless they be very closely related.—ED.

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and frequently end in a quarrel. The various classes of common Sudras also get up feasts amongst themselves, but these have no resemblance to the *samaradhanas* of the Brahmins, the only motive of the feasters being to enjoy a festivity which usually ends in a debauch. At a Brahmin feast the greatest order and propriety prevail. but Sudra feasts differ in no wise from the orgies which take place in Europe in the low pot-houses frequented by the scum of the population. The Sudras generally postpone the discussion of their many and frequent differences until some occasion of this sort comes round. Every one, indeed, arrives with a firm determination to have a good fight and to make plenty of noise over it. The moment when the meal is ready and the giver of the feast has invited his guests to come in and partake of it, is generally the time that they consider most suitable for the discussion of their pretended grievances. They stop the whole assemblage by uttering the customary oath in the name of the prince or governor of the province, and declare that no one shall begin to eat until their grievances have been listened to, their wrongs redressed, and the culprits punished. And then the dispute begins. Some take one side and some another, but all participate in it, and the quarrel becomes general. They all scream at the top of their voices, without listening to a word any one else is saying; they hurl the most disgusting accusations at one another, mixed with horrible imprecations and insults, without pausing to give either party a chance of replying. Then their blood rises, and the quarrel waxes warmer and warmer. They proceed to threatening gestures and rush towards each other, their faces contorted with rage and fury. Any one who did not know the Hindu character would swear they were all going to fly at each other's throats. Their host, however, who generally maintains a strict neutrality on these occasions, continues to superintend his domestic arrangements with the utmost composure, or else retires to some peaceful corner and quietly smokes his pipe, a tranquil spectator of the scene around him, knowing full well that the belligerents must ultimately tire themselves out by the vehemence of their cries and gesticulations, and that they will calm down from sheer exhaustion. He then selects three or four to act as arbitrators, and, placing himself with them between the two parties, succeeds, after no

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little difficulty, in restoring peace. They then investigate the cause of the quarrel, and try to arrange the affair so as to satisfy both sides. If this is impossible, the final decision is put off till some future time, when the whole scene is re-enacted from the beginning. Promptly forgetting the epithets which they have been mutually heaping on each other, the guests at length seat themselves and begin the feast, which has had plenty of time to get cold. As a rule it would be waste of labour to try to arrange a difference of opinion between Sudras without first allowing them to quarrel and abuse each other, and even come to blows[1]. After these preliminaries, which they generally repeat several times, you may attempt the task of reconciliation with some hope of success.

The Pariahs also sometimes have feasts amongst themselves, but these are invariably disgusting orgies. Following the customs of their caste, they make a point of intoxicating themselves with the juice of the palm-tree, of which there is always a vast quantity drunk. The guests, who know that these orgies always end in a free fight, go ready armed with stout sticks, and the feast rarely concludes without bloodshed. Similar quarrels almost always form part of the wedding ceremonies of a Sudra. During the time that I lived in India, I celebrated over 2,000 marriages amongst Christian Sudras of all castes; and I only remember one such occasion on which there was not a violent altercation, which ended more often than not in a furious, if not sanguinary, battle. The principal cause of dissension is the marriage settlement. It is seldom that the bride's parents do not try to cheat those of the bridegroom over the quantity or value of the jewels, or over the colour and price of the wedding garments. At other times, perhaps, it is the friends and relations who feel themselves aggrieved. They complain bitterly that the respect and consideration which were their due have not been shown them, either in not consulting them before the marriage was arranged, or by a lack of due form and ceremony in their invitation.

[1] The truth is, a marriage or funeral ceremony is the only occasion when all the members of one family or members of one caste meet, and it therefore offers the best, if not the only, opportunity for an aggrieved member to lay his complaint before his caste-headmen. It is too much to say that they come 'determined to have a good fight,' with or without reason.—ED.

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There are many small details which must be attended to when a feast is given amongst the various Sudra classes. The quality of the food, the method of preparing and serving it, and a thousand other minutiae, are all points which have long since been settled by immemorial custom, the non-observance of which would entail very serious consequences. Even involuntary mistakes of the most trivial kind are not overlooked or forgiven. The following story is an instance. I was once in a village where a man of the *Oopara* or gardener caste was giving a feast to his friends and to the headman of his caste. All the guests had seated themselves and begun their meal, when one of them, whilst eating, found a small stone in his rice, which hurt his teeth. He promptly spat out everything he had in his mouth on to his plate, found the tiny stone, and placing it in the hollow of his hand rose from his place, and thus addressed all the other guests. 'Sirs!' he said, pointing to the giver of the feast, 'here is a man who invites us to his house, and then gives us stones instead of rice!' And he then showed this little pebble to every person present. 'Shame! shame!' cried all the guests; 'our host must be punished.' Thereupon they all got up, leaving their meal unfinished, to deliberate as to the punishment that should be inflicted for so grave an offence. The poor fellow was mulcted in a heavy fine, and was also condemned to provide another feast on twice as sumptuous a scale for the heads of the caste.

It is considered good style amongst the Sudras never to appear pleased or satisfied with any entertainment that may be offered them. The host may spend large sums for the gratification of his guests, and may take every possible care that the food is nicely prepared and well served; but the greatest compliment that he can expect or hope for is that his feast is just fit for dogs. Hence the common saying, that if a Sudra invited to a feast can find fault with nothing else, he will be sure to complain that there was not enough salt.

The master of the house must not be annoyed at these incivilities; he must listen to the fault-finding patiently, and make what excuses he can for the inferiority of his repast. His only consolation is the thought of the revenge he will take

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when he, in his turn, is invited to a feast by his fastidious and too candid friends.

Intoxicating drinks are forbidden at these feasts, and it would be considered an insult of the deepest dye to even suggest them. When the meal is over, betel is handed round, and the guests retire at once.

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CHAPTER IX

The Kinds of Food expressly forbidden to Brahmins.—Occult Rites.—The Disgusting Rite called *Sakti*.

THERE are as regards food three things which a Brahmin must avoid with the most scrupulous care: he must not eat anything that has had life or has even contained the principle of life; he must not drink intoxicating liquors; he must not touch food that has been prepared by persons of another caste. It is no greater privation to a Brahmin to abstain from eating meat, accustomed as he is from his earliest youth to go without it, and even to look upon it as abominable food, than it is for us to refrain from eating the flesh of certain domestic animals, for which, either from natural prejudice or from its unpleasant taste, we feel a strong repugnance. Thus, when a Hindu abstains from all animal food, he is only conforming to a feeling of unconquerable repulsion, the result partly of imagination and partly of long-established custom. I once met a Brahmin who, on seeing some eggs being broken and beaten up for an omelette, immediately complained of feeling unwell, and in the course of a few moments was violently sick.

The aversion which Brahmins feel for *sura-pana*, or the use of intoxicating beverages—an aversion to which I have several times had occasion to call attention—springs at any rate from most commendable principles. In places where Brahmins congregate in great numbers infractions of this rule of abstinence are extremely rare, and such a thing as a drunken Brahmin is unknown. They are not, however, quite so strict on this point when they live in some isolated spot, away from the watchful eyes of their *gurus*. A Brahmin's house, situated at some distance from a village in Tanjore, once caught fire, and the inhabitants of the village hastened to the spot to try and snatch what they could from the flames.

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Amongst the things saved were a large earthen vessel of salt pork and another containing arrack, or native rum. The proprietor felt the loss of his house much less than he did this overwhelming disclosure. He became the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood, and felt the jeers and mockery of which he was the object so keenly that he was obliged to leave the country and hide his shame elsewhere. One may well conjecture, without doing them any injustice, that there are many other Brahmins whose delinquencies have not been brought to light by accidents of this kind. These lapses from strict adherence to the law are especially frequent in towns, where illicit pleasures are easily obtainable. More than once it has come to my knowledge that certain Brahmins were in the habit of meeting in small numbers in the houses of Sudras in whom they thought they could place confidence, there to partake in the strictest privacy of feasts from which neither intoxicating liquors nor meat were excluded. Furthermore, the Brahmins became so demoralized by these debauches that they allowed their hosts to eat with them, thus shamelessly committing a threefold breach of those laws of their caste which they are most especially enjoined to keep.

These little orgies sometimes entail very unpleasant consequences. The Sudras' wives are, of course, obliged to be in the secret, and as La Fontaine says:—

> 'Rien ne pèse tant qu'un secret;
> Le porter loin est difficile aux dames.'

Hindu women are by no means exceptions to this rule. A Brahmin woman whom I knew, allowed herself to be persuaded by a Sudra woman, a friend of hers, to eat part of a stew which the latter had cooked, and she even went so far as to say she thought it excellent. A short time afterwards the two friends quarrelled, and at the end of a violent altercation the Sudra woman, to punish her adversary and silence her at the same time, publicly proclaimed the sin which the other in a moment of greediness had committed. Covered with shame and confusion at this unexpected revelation, which she found it impossible to refute, the poor Brahmin woman fled from the place in despair, vowing, too late, that she would never allow herself to be caught again.

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The use of intoxicating liquors is more common than the eating of forbidden food, as it is so much less liable to detection. At the same time, it must be admitted, it is an unheard-of thing to see an intoxicated Brahmin in the public streets. The reproach of intemperance can only be levelled at a very small number of men of low reputation, who have lost all sense of shame. One could not, with any degree of justice, say that the reproach was generally applicable to Brahmins, who are in this matter beyond even the shafts of slander itself[1].

The duty of punishing offences of this kind devolves upon the *gurus*. When in the course of their peregrinations they hear that any one has misconducted himself in such a manner, they order the culprit to appear before them; and if after due investigation his delinquency is proved, he has to listen to a severe reprimand and occasionally undergo corporal punishment. Frequently also he has to pay a heavy fine; and if the offence is a very grave one, he is put out of caste. Nevertheless, for fear lest too many persons might be inculpated, or on account of the high position of a particular delinquent, or to avoid creating a scandal, or for other similar reasons, the *gurus* find it advisable to shut their eyes to many peccadilloes. The *gurus*, too, are not always impeccable in the matter of bribes, and will often find reasons for allowing a culprit to escape who has managed to ingratiate himself with them.

I was once at Dharmapuri, a small town in the Carnatic, just at the time when a Brahmin *guru* was visiting that district. A person of the Brahmin caste was accused before him of breaking the rules with regard to food, and even of publicly deriding them. The accusation was a very serious one, and well substantiated; so the culprit was cited to appear, and the evidence against him was heard. The *guru*, convinced of the guilt of the accused, had made up his mind to break his triple cord and turn him out of caste; but the accused, on hearing of this terrible determination, showed not the smallest emotion. Without displaying the least discomfiture he advanced boldly

[1] This applies equally well in the present day. Yet nobody can doubt that the number of Brahmins who infringe caste-customs in food and drink is increasing year by year.—ED.

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into the midst of the assembly, and prostrating himself before the *guru*, made the following speech:—'So you have decided, you and your assessors, to break my cord! Well, that will not be a heavy loss, as for two farthings I can get another. But what is your motive for treating me with so much severity, and for dishonouring me thus publicly? Is it because I have eaten animal food? But then a *guru's* justice should be meted out impartially, and punishments should be awarded without respect of persons. Why am I the only one to be accused, the only one to be punished, when there are so many others who are quite as much to blame as myself, or even more so? If I turn my eyes on one side, I see two or three among my accusers who not long since partook with me of an excellent leg of mutton. If I look on the other side, I see several who have not disdained to accept the invitation of a common Sudra friend, who treated us to an admirable chicken stew; while there are others not less to blame on this score who have not dared to put in an appearance in this assembly. Have I your permission to mention their names? I am quite ready to produce witnesses, and to substantiate my accusation.'

Struck dumb by this speech, which was delivered with the utmost confidence and imperturbable assurance, the *guru* began to consider what the consequences of this affair would be, and how it would end if he persisted in carrying it to its proper termination; so he put a stop to all future complications by crying out, with great presence of mind: 'Who has brought this babbler here? Do you not see that he is mad? Turn him out of the assembly at once, and let me hear no more of him.'

If these slight and rare infractions of the law, which are, after all, only weaknesses inseparable from human nature, were the only sins, they would be undeniably small indeed; but occasionally one may also come across vice and wickedness in their most hideous forms. It once came to my knowledge that men calling themselves conjurers or magicians used to attend nocturnal gatherings, which were held in a deserted spot that I knew of, there to give themselves up to indescribable orgies of debauch and intemperance.

The leader of these orgies was a Vishnavite Brahmin, and several Sudras were initiated into the mysterious iniquities which were carried on there. They drank and ate to excess every-

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thing that is forbidden to a Hindu, not excepting even the flesh of the cow, and the abominations practised on these occasions are too disgusting to be described. They always finished up with sacrifices and displays of magic, the supposed effects of which spread fear and consternation amongst the peaceable inhabitants of the whole neighbourhood, for the superstitious terrors of the Hindu are easily awakened. People were on the point of appealing to the magistrates for protection against these diabolical assemblies, when the debauchees who composed them, seeing they were about to be discovered, left the province and never dared to appear there again.

Amongst the abominable rites practised in India is one which is only too well known; it is called *sakti-puja*; *sakti* meaning strength or power[1]. Sometimes it is the wife of Siva to whom this sacrifice is offered; sometimes they pretend that it is in honour of some invisible power. The ceremony takes place at night with more or less secrecy. The least disgusting of these orgies are those where they confine themselves to eating and drinking everything that the custom of the country forbids, and where men and women, huddled together in indiscriminate confusion, openly and shamelessly violate the commonest laws of decency and modesty.

The *Namadharis*, or followers of Vishnu, are the most frequent perpetrators of these disgusting sacrifices. People of all castes, from the Brahmin to the Pariah, are invited to attend. When the company are assembled, all kinds of meat, including beef, are placed before the idol of Vishnu. Ample provision is also made of arrack, toddy and opium, and any other intoxicating drug they can lay their hands on. The whole is then offered to Vishnu. Afterwards the *pujari*, or sacrificer, who is generally a Brahmin, first of all tastes the various kinds of meats and liquors himself, then gives the others permission to devour the rest. Men and women thereupon begin to eat greedily, the same piece of meat passing from mouth to mouth, each person taking a bite, until it is finished. Then they start afresh on

[1] It is more correctly described as 'the power or energy of the god as represented in some of the many female forms.' It has been estimated that of the Hindus in Bengal, about three-fourths are devoted to the worship of *sakti*, though the forms of worship vary greatly. In Bengal the *Vamacharis* observe the most disgusting rites of all.—ED.

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another joint, which they gnaw in the same manner, tearing the meat out of each other's mouths. When all the meat has been consumed, intoxicating liquors are passed round, every one drinking without repugnance out of the same cup. Opium and other drugs disappear in a similar fashion. They persuade themselves that under these circumstances they do not contract impurity by eating and drinking in so revolting a manner. When they are all completely intoxicated, men and women no longer keep apart, but pass the rest of the night together, giving themselves up without restraint to the grossest immorality without any risk of disagreeable consequences. A husband who sees his wife in another man's arms cannot recall her, nor has he the right to complain; for at those times every woman becomes common property. Perfect equality exists among all castes, and the Brahmin is not of higher caste than the Pariah. The celebration of these mysterious rites may differ sometimes in outward forms, but in spirit they are always equally abominable. Under certain circumstances the principal objects which form the sacrifice to *sakti* are a large vessel full of native rum and a full-grown girl. The latter, stark naked, remains standing in a most indecent attitude. The goddess *Sakti* is evoked, and is supposed to respond to the invitation to come and take up her abode in the vessel full of rum, and also in the girl's body.

A sacrifice of flowers, incense, sandalwood, coloured rice, and a lighted lamp is then offered to these two objects; and for *neiveddya* a portion of all the viands that have been prepared. This done, Brahmins, Sudras, Pariahs, both men and women, intoxicate themselves with the rum which was offered to *sakti*, all drinking from the same cup in turn[1]. To exchange pieces of the food that they are in the act of eating, and to put into one's own mouth what has just been taken from another's, are under these conditions regarded as acts of virtue by the fanatics. As usual, the meeting winds up with the most revolting orgy.

Without the salutary restraint of a healthy tone of morality, how can these people be expected to fight successfully against the vehemence of their passions? And then, when they give way to unbridled licence, they think to stifle remorse by investing these horrible practices with a religious element, as if

[1] I have mentioned before that to a Hindu who has been decently brought up this mode of drinking is absolutely abhorrent.—DUBOIS.

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sacrilege could disguise their moral turpitude. Strange to say, it is the Brahmins, and very often the women of this caste, who are frequently the most ardent promoters of these Bacchanalian orgies. However, debauches of this kind entail such heavy expenses as fortunately to prevent their frequent recurrence.

Of course it is well known that most ancient nations had their own peculiar mysterious rites, and that very few among them failed to worship profligacy in some shape or other. Greece might well feel ashamed of the depravity which pervaded the *cultus* of a large number of her deities. Many remains still exist, proving irrefutably that the grossest excesses defiled the temples of Venus, Ceres, Bacchus, &c., while the Persian Mitra and the Egyptian Osiris were the objects of equally impure worship.

Holy Scripture tells us something of the abominations practised by the Canaanites in honour of Baal, Baal-peor, and Moloch, which brought down upon them such terrible punishments. Thus we see that, all the world over, idolatry assumed much the same forms, for ignorance and fanaticism can have but one termination.

At the same time, the Hindus, accustomed as they are to carry everything to extremes, appear to have surpassed all the other nations of the world, both ancient and modern, in the unconscionable depravity with which so many of their religious rites are impregnated.

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CHAPTER X

The Various Occupations of Brahmins.

If Brahmins kept strictly to the letter of the rules of their caste, they would live in isolated places, far from the haunts of men, where their whole lives would be spent in religious exercises. They would perform their ablutions regularly three times a day; they would offer the sacrifice called *sraddha* to their ancestors, a ceremony which they alone have the right to perform; they would look after their households, paying particular attention to the education of their children; and they would devote all their leisure moments to reading the Vedas and other sacred writings, to acquiring knowledge, and to meditation. But the poverty of many of their number, and the avarice and ambition which are the ruling passions of each and all, preclude the possibility of such a philosophical mode of existence.

Naturally cunning, wily, double-tongued, and servile, they turn these most undesirable qualities to account by insinuating themselves everywhere; their main object, upon which they expend the greatest ingenuity, being to gain access to the courts of princes or other people of high rank. This end achieved, they quickly gain, by their hypocritical conduct, the affection and confidence of those who have received them; and very soon the best and most lucrative posts are the reward of their pressing attentions. Thus it happens that the prime ministers of Asiatic princes are almost always Brahmins. Shut up in their palaces, and plunged in voluptuous idleness, the nominal rulers rarely give a thought to anything beyond the means of increasing their enjoyments, creating fresh amusements, and giving new zest to their passions by ever-varying means. The welfare of their people and the government of their country are very secondary considerations, if not matters of indifference. Women, baths,

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perfumes, obscene dances, filthy songs, each in turn excite their senses. Only flatterers of the lowest type and despicable procurers are allowed to come near them, and these are always ready to applaud the dissolute vagaries of their master.

That the Brahmins, thus raised to positions of importance at the courts of these slothful and useless princes, do not forget their relatives and friends, can well be imagined. Indeed they usually divide the most lucrative of the subordinate posts among them. Thus surrounded by creatures upon whom they can rely and who can also rely upon them, a tacit collusion is established, by means of which each one can, in his own department, enrich himself with remarkable rapidity, by carrying on unchecked a system of injustice, fraud, dishonesty, and oppression—qualities in which most individuals of this caste have been thoroughly well trained.

Better educated, more cunning, more keen-witted, with greater talents for intrigue than other Hindus, Brahmins become necessary even to the Mussulman princes themselves, who cannot govern without their assistance. The Mahomedan rulers generally make a Brahmin their secretary of state, through whose hands all the state correspondence must pass. Brahmins also frequently fill the positions of secretaries and writers to the governors of provinces and districts. Generally speaking, the Mahomedans of India are so ignorant of the first principles of public administration, and so utterly unacquainted with the simplest rules of arithmetic, that they are obliged to have recourse to the Brahmins for everything that requires enlightenment and knowledge. In return, the latter know how to copy only too faithfully the harsh and tyrannical methods of the Mahomedans. When it is a question of plundering the people or extorting money from them, they employ a thousand vexatious means, sometimes even going so far as to resort to torture. But they rarely obtain the same hold over the Mahomedan princes that they do over those of their own religion. With the former they remain at their posts until by endless peculation and extortion, either authorized or tacitly allowed, they contrive to amass large fortunes. But the moment their wealth becomes a notorious fact, that moment their disgrace is certain. They in their turn are imprisoned, tortured, and forced to disgorge the riches that they have so unjustly acquired. However, some of them,

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foreseeing the fate that must befall the servants of such masters, keep a sharp look-out, and place the fruit of their plunder in security, either by keeping a part of it in some secret hiding-place, or by sending it away to some country beyond the tyrant's reach.

The Brahmins have also been clever enough to work their way into favour with the great European Power that now governs India. They occupy the highest and most lucrative posts in the different administrative boards and Government offices, as well as in the judicial courts of the various districts. In fact there is no branch of public administration in which they have not made themselves indispensable. Thus it is nearly always Brahmins who hold the posts of sub-collectors of revenue, writers, copyists, translators, treasurers, book-keepers, &c. It is especially difficult to do without their assistance in all matters connected with accounts, as they have a remarkable talent for arithmetic. I have seen some men in the course of a few minutes work out, to the last fraction, long and complicated calculations, which would have taken the best accountants in Europe hours to get through[1].

Furthermore, their perfect knowledge of native opinion and of the ways in which it may be guided, to say nothing of the influence which they exercise over public feeling by the prerogatives of their birth, are quite sufficient reasons to account for the readiness with which their services are accepted. In fact, the veneration and respect with which their fellow-countrymen regard them shed, in the opinion of the vulgar, a kind of reflected glory and dignity on the different Government offices in which they occupy subordinate positions. But woe to the European head of the office, who does not keep the strictest watch over the conduct of these said subordinates, or places implicit confidence in them! He will soon find himself the victim of his own negligence, with his position seriously compromised. I have known many Europeans holding most distinguished and lucrative appointments end by losing their reputation, their honour, their position, and their fortune, all because they left too much in the hands of the Brahmins under them, for whose misdeeds

[1] The proportion of Brahmins in Government employ is higher than ever now; and it is the Brahmins who, more than any others, have availed themselves of the benefits of English education.—ED.

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the Government held them responsible. In vain did these high officials exhaust all their resources against the authors of their ruin; imprisonment and punishment were equally ineffectual. Most of these peccant subordinates would rather die in irons than restore one farthing of their ill-gotten gains.

One can well imagine that when Brahmins are launched in the turmoil of public affairs they soon lose sight of the religious observances of their caste. Occupied with the government of a kingdom or a province, they have neither the time nor even the wish to give themselves up to the exercise of their interminable religious rites. As, however, they are in positions of authority and can dispense or withhold favours at their pleasure, no one dares to call attention to their negligence. It is sufficient if they conform in the more important matters. Their dignity releases them, without entailing disagreeable consequences, from the necessity of attending to minor details. Firmly convinced as they are of the truth of their favourite dictum that *to fill one's belly one must play many parts*, Brahmins are clever at turning their hands to many ways of earning a livelihood. Some take up medicine, and it is said with considerable success. Others become soldiers. In the Mahratta armies there are many Brahmins; but I cannot believe that a military force composed of men of this caste could ever be very formidable. Bravery and courage are foreign to their nature, and their education would not tend to foster these soldier-like qualities. Nevertheless, there have been several Brahmin generals whose military careers have not been without glory. Many Brahmins who are in trade, especially in the province of Gujerat, are considered excellent men of business. Those, however, who choose this walk in life are rather looked down upon by the rest of their caste, not so much on account of their profession as merchants or shopkeepers, but because of the very small amount of attention which they pay to their caste customs and observances. Trade in itself is not considered at all degrading to a Brahmin, and men of this caste who are engaged in it are to be met with everywhere; only there are many things which Brahmins are not allowed to sell, and which consequently they cannot include in their operations, such, for instance, as red cloths, the seeds and oil of sesamum, husked rice, liquids of every kind, salt, perfumes, fruits, vegetables, poisons, honey, butter, milk, sugar, &c.

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One almost invariably finds that subordinate collectors of revenue, custom-house officers, writers, book-keepers, village schoolmasters, and astronomers are Brahmins. They are very useful as messengers, because they are never detained anywhere; and it is for this reason that many of the large merchants, living in provinces governed by native princes, employ them as coolies or porters, and pay them very highly, because custom-house officers have orders to let everything that they carry pass through free. This calling, though arduous, is by no means the least lucrative. Those who follow it travel almost free of expense, for along every main road there are numerous hostelries called *chuttrams*, where Brahmins alone have the right to lodge, and where they are fed gratuitously. The revenues which these establishments derive from their landed property, and the abundant alms which they receive, amply compensate the persons who manage them, and who are Brahmins also, for the expenses entailed by the hospitality which they extend to their brethren.

The great facility with which they can everywhere introduce themselves under all sorts of disguises, without exciting the smallest suspicion, and the adroitness with which they can play all sorts of parts and extricate themselves from the most difficult positions, render them peculiarly well fitted to act as spies in time of war, always supposing that you can be sure that they are not serving both parties, a circumstance which often happens without any one being the wiser. Poverty or self-interest sometimes reduces them to occupy positions which are very derogatory to their illustrious birth. Thus sometimes they are seen acting as dancing-masters to courtesans attached to the service of the temples. Others become cooks; but when they are reduced to this latter calling, and serve masters of inferior caste, these latter undertake never to touch the vessels which their cook uses in preparing the food. The cook will serve the food when it is ready, but will not remove what is left after the meal is over. What the Brahmin cook prepares and touches is pure for his master, but what the master touches is impure and would defile the cook. Some even demean themselves so far as to be washermen and water-carriers for persons of their own caste, and even undertake to perform the very meanest requirements of domestic service.

Superstition, which exercises such an important influence

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throughout the whole of India, also affords great resources to those in search of a means of livelihood. An illness, a fall, a law-suit, a fresh undertaking, a newly built house, a bad omen, an unpleasant dream, and a thousand other similar things, are all occasions on which their credulous neighbours come running to them for advice, and for which they make them pay as dearly as possible. The Hindu Almanac, about the composition of which I have already spoken, has always an answer or a remedy for everything. Brahmins are never at a loss for an answer, no matter on what point they may be consulted. Clever charlatans that they are, they make their various calculations with the utmost gravity; and to give greater weight to their words they bewilder their clients with stories invented on the spur of the moment, which they tell with portentous emphasis. For, I repeat again, as arch-impostors they are absolutely unrivalled. Every Hindu is an adept at disguising the truth; but on this point the Brahmin far excels every other caste. Indeed, this vice has become so deeply engrained, that, far from being ashamed of it, they regard it on the contrary as a subject for exultation and vanity. I once had a long conversation with two of those Brahmins who gain their living at the expense of the credulous public, and they ended by agreeing with me as to the superiority of the Christian religion over the absurdities of their own theogony. 'All that you say is reasonable and true,' they repeated several times. 'But then,' I replied, 'if all that I say is reasonable and true, it follows that all that you say to the people must be false and ridiculous.' 'That also is true,' they admitted; 'but these lies comprise our livelihood. If we were to expound to the people only such truths as you have just been telling us, how should we obtain *the wherewithal to fill our stomachs?*'

Then again, flattery, in the art of which Brahmins are also past-masters, is also a great source of profit to them. However proud and haughty they may be, they never find any difficulty in grovelling, in the most humiliating manner, at the feet of any one from whom they think they can gain some advantage. They attach themselves like leeches to the great merchants or other rich individuals, and are never tired of playing the *rôle* of admirers and flatterers. They know full well that to appeal to a native's vanity is to attack him at his weakest point; and

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naturally they turn this knowledge to the best possible account. The grossest flattery, verging on the absurd, is what is most pleasing to the ears of their modest patrons, and is the surest way of loosening the latter's purse-strings. But the most inexhaustible mine of wealth to Brahmins is their religion. As chief priests they exercise the highest functions, and consequently derive almost all the profit. In certain famous temples, such as Tirupati, Rameswaram, Jaganath (Puri) and others, thousands of Brahmins live on the revenues with which these temples are endowed.

Those who cannot find means of existence in their native country go and seek their fortunes elsewhere, often journeying as much as two hundred miles from their families. Expatriation is a very small matter to them, and they never hesitate to accept it if there is anything to be gained by it.

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CHAPTER XI

Religious Tolerance amongst the Brahmins.—Their Indifference with regard to their own Religion.—Their Sublime Ideas of the Deity.—A Comparison between them and the Greek Philosophers.—The State of Christianity.—The Political Intolerance and Ignorant Presumption of Brahmins.

I HAVE already said that the general feeling amongst Brahmins is that all the Hindu deities ought to receive an equal share of attention and worship, since they are not really antagonistic one to another. The quarrels and wars which erstwhile took place between these deities were never of long duration, and have in no wise prevented their living since then in perfect amity together. I have also remarked that in consequence of this the greater number of the Brahmins strongly disapprove of the numerous sectaries who devote themselves to the worship of one particular deity and pay little or no attention to the others, on the ground that they are inferior and subordinate to the special deity which they prefer. But are these self-same Brahmins really so devoted to the religion of their country and to the worship of these deities? Well, though this assertion may appear paradoxical, I should say that, of all Hindus, they care the least and have the smallest amount of faith in them. It is by no means uncommon to hear them speaking of their gods in terms of the most utter contempt. When they are displeased with their idols they do not scruple to upbraid them fiercely to their faces, at the same time heaping the grossest insults upon them, with every outward gesture and sign of anger and resentment. In fact, there is absolutely no limit to the blasphemies, curses, and abuse which they hurl at them under these circumstances[1].

[1] Any one who is familiar with the vernaculars of India knows that they contain an immense number of terms of abuse, which are so extraordinary,

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There is a well-known Hindu proverb which says, 'A temple mouse fears not the gods.' This exactly applies to the Brahmins, who enter their temples without showing the slightest sign of serious thought or respect for the divinities who are enshrined in them. Indeed, they often seem to choose these particular places to quarrel and to fight in. Even while performing their numerous religious fooleries, their behaviour shows no indication of fervour or real devotion. As a matter of fact, their religious devotion increases or diminishes in proportion to the amount of profit they expect to make out of it, and it also depends on the amount of publicity surrounding them. Those deities who do not contribute towards the welfare of their votaries here below only receive very careless and perfunctory worship.

The histories of their gods are so ridiculous and so extravagant that it is not surprising that the Brahmins are at heart conscious of the absurdity of worshipping such beings. There is, therefore, very little danger incurred in ridiculing the gods in the presence of Brahmins. Very often they agree with the scoffer, and even enlarge upon what he has said. Many Brahmins can repeat by heart songs and verses that treat with very scanty respect the divinities which they worship so ostentatiously in public, while their audience listen without any sign of disapproval. Brahmins have no fear of such conduct calling forth either reproof or punishment. The Sudras, who are more simple and credulous than the Brahmins, would not be

and so abominably obscene, that it would be impossible to find their counterpart in any Billingsgate of Europe. However, disgusting expressions are so greatly to the taste of the Hindus, that, not content with their own well-endowed vocabulary, they carefully learned appropriate all the bad language that they hear in their quarrels with the foreigners who live amongst them. When Hindus are angry with their gods, which is usually the case when they do not receive a favourable answer to their prayers, one may see them entering the temples with many outward expressions of rage and mortification, and exhausting their vocabulary in curses and reproaches hurled against their unhappy gods, whom they openly accuse of impotence and fraud. In their ordinary conversation they often use most irreverent expressions regarding their gods, one of the least obnoxious being, 'If I do not keep my word may the same punishment fall upon me as I should deserve if I had seduced the wife of my god.' If a person of high position has a grievance against the gods, he sometimes revenges himself by having the doors of their temples stopped up with thorns and brambles, so that no one can enter to worship or to offer sacrifices.—Dubois.

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so indulgent under similar circumstances, and it would be particularly imprudent to ridicule any particular god of theirs in the presence of those who are specially devoted to him.

There is another factor which must be taken into account in estimating the scanty veneration which they pay their gods, to whom nevertheless self-interest, education, custom, and respect for public opinion oblige them to display outward respect; and that is the clear and precise knowledge which most of them must have gleaned from their books of a 'God who is the Author and Creator of all things; eternal, immaterial, omnipresent, independent, in all things blessed, exempt from pain and care; the spirit of truth, the source of all justice; governor, dispensator, and regulator of all things; perfect in wisdom and knowledge; without shape or countenance, without limit, without nature, without name, without caste, without parentage; of an absolute purity which excludes all passion, all bias, all compromise.'

All these qualifications and many others which are not less characteristic are translated literally from their books, and are used by Brahmins to explain the Supreme Being, to whom they sometimes give the name of *Parabrahma, Paramattma*, &c. Is it credible that, knowing this, they can seriously bestow the title of gods on the almost countless number of animate and inanimate things which form the chief objects of the vulgar cult? It follows, therefore, that they ought to confine their worship to this supreme and unique Being, of whom they still retain such a sublime perception. There appears to be no doubt whatever that their Brahmin ancestors worshipped only this one Supreme Being; but with the lapse of time they fell victims to idolatry and superstition, and, shutting their eyes to the light that they possessed, stifled the voice of conscience. Was it not for the same reason that God pronounced that condemnation of which the Apostle St. Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Romans against certain philosophers of his time, who knowingly rejected the truth? Is not this the reason why the Brahmins of to-day are given over, like those philosophers of old, to all the sins of a perverse will and to the many kinds of vice and corruption with which they are imbued, and from which other castes are more or less exempt, seeing that they possess stronger faith?

It is true that Brahmins are not the only philosophers who

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have been induced by purely worldly considerations to hide the greatest and most important of truths from their fellow-men. They are only following in the steps of the philosophers of ancient Greece. Even Socrates, the greatest of them all, whose ideas on the subject of the Deity were almost as perfect as those which have been given us by revelation, never dared to avow them openly: and, although he thoroughly recognized all the absurdities of paganism, he maintained the principle that every one should follow the religion of his country.

Plato, his disciple, who was so distressed that Greece and all the other countries of the world should be given over to a false and dissolute religion, and who also, like Socrates, believed in the true God, said that these were truths which should not be disclosed to the common people.

The whole world, as Bossuet says, was plunged at that time in the same error; and truth, though known to a few, remained captive and dared not appear in the light of day. Those who knew and believed in the true God thought it sufficient to worship Him in secret, and held that there was no harm in paying outward respect to idols with the rest of the world. Revelation had not yet purified their ideas on this subject. The truth was known only in one very small corner of the world. The worshippers of the true God were only to be seen in small numbers in the temple of Jerusalem.

But there is one essential difference between these ancient philosophers and the modern Hindus: the former were few in number, and lacked the necessary means and influence which would have enabled them to make an impression on the multitude and successfully combat the errors into which it had fallen; whereas the Brahmins, owing to their numbers and to the high estimation in which they are held by the public, could easily, if they wished, and if their interests and their vices were not opposed thereto, overthrow the entire edifice of idolatry throughout the whole of India, and substitute the knowledge and worship of the true God, of whom they already possess so perfect an idea.

Brahmins do not confine themselves to professing devotion to all the Hindu deities. Though the rules of their caste forbid their indulging in any outward signs of worship to the gods of other nations, one of the principles taught in their books

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and recognized by them is that, among the many different religions to be found throughout the world, and which they call *Anantaveda*, there is not one that should be despised and condemned. They might even entertain some feeling of respect for Mahomedanism, encumbered though it is with so much outward form and ceremony, and with the many superstitions with which the Indian Mahomedans have invested it, had not the harsh and oppressive rule of the latter, as well as their open contempt for the civil and religious institutions of the rest of the inhabitants, made their persons and their religion equally odious to the Hindus.

The Christian religion commands the approbation of Brahmins in several respects. They admire its pure and holy morality; but, at the same time, they hold that some of its precepts are beyond man's power of fulfilment, and that its sublimely high standard of morality is only suitable for persons leading a contemplative life, who have retired from the world and are consequently sheltered from its temptations. On the other hand, as Christianity condemns most of their customs and superstitions. it has on that account become most hateful to them. The Hindu who embraces it is not considered to belong to the same nation as themselves, because his new religion forces him to reject those customs and practices which they regard as the link binding them all indissolubly together.

However, it must be confessed that if, in these latter days, idolatrous Hindus have shown a greater aversion to the Christian religion as they became better acquainted with Europeans, the result must be attributed solely to the bad conduct of the latter. How could the Hindus think well of this holy religion, when they see those who have been brought up in it, and who come from a country where it is the only one that is publicly professed, openly violating its precepts and often making its doctrines the subject of sarcasm and silly jests? It is curious to note that the Brahmin does not believe in his religion, and yet he outwardly observes it; while the Christian believes in his, and yet he does not outwardly observe it. What a sad and shameful contrast!

Before the character and behaviour of Europeans became well known to these people, it seemed possible that Christianity

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might take root amongst them. Little by little it was overcoming the numberless obstacles which the prejudices of the country continually placed in its way. Several missionaries, animated by a truly apostolic zeal, had penetrated into the interior of the country, and there, by conforming scrupulously to all the usages and customs of the Brahmins—in their clothing, food, conversation, and general conduct in life—had managed to win the attention of the people, and by dint of perseverance had succeeded in gaining a hearing. Their high character, talents, and virtues, and above all their perfect disinterestedness, obtained for them the countenance and support of even the native princes, who, agreeably surprised at the novelty of their teaching, took these extraordinary men under their protection, and gave them liberty to preach their religion and make what proselytes they could.

It is a well-known fact that Robert à Nobilibus, a nephew of the famous Cardinal Bellarmin, and founder of the Mission at Madura, where he died at the beginning of the last century, converted nearly 100,000 idolaters in that very kingdom. His contemporary, the Jesuit Brito, baptized 30,000 heathens in the country of the Maravas, where he finally gained the crown of martyrdom. The missionaries scattered about the other provinces of the Peninsula also laboured hard, and with the greatest success, to extend Christianity amongst the Hindus. The French Mission at Pondicherry numbered 60,000 native Christians in the province of Arcot, and was daily making further progress when the conquest of the country by Europeans took place—a disastrous event as far as the advance of Christianity was concerned. Having witnessed the immoral and disorderly conduct of the Europeans who then overran the whole country, the Hindus would hear no more of a religion which appeared to have so little influence over the behaviour of those professing it, and who had been brought up in its tenets; and their prejudice against Christianity has gone on increasing steadily day by day, as the people became more familiar with Europeans, until it finally received its death-blow. For it is certainly a fact that for the last sixty years very few converts have been made in India. Those still remaining (and their number is daily diminished by apostasy) are mostly the descendants of the original converts made by the Jesuit

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missionaries. About eighty years ago there must have been at least 1,200,000 native Christians in the Peninsula, while now, at the very utmost, they amount to but one-half of that number.

This holy religion, which, when it was first introduced into India about 300 years ago, had only such obstacles as indifference or deep-rooted superstition to contend with, is now looked upon with unconquerable aversion. A respectable Hindu who was asked to embrace the Christian religion, would look upon the suggestion either as a joke, or else as an insult of the deepest dye. To such an extreme is this hatred now carried in some parts, that were a Hindu of good repute to be on intimate terms with Christians, he would not dare own it in public.

A Hindu who embraces Christianity nowadays must make up his mind to lose everything that makes life pleasant. He is henceforth an outcast from society. He must renounce his patrimony, his right to inherit, his father, mother, wife, children, and friends[1]. He is abandoned and shunned by every one.

Europeans should indeed blush and take shame to themselves when they see to what depths of degradation and abasement the religion of their fathers has sunk in this country through the misconduct and bad example of their fellows[2].

But to return to the matter in hand: many people have attributed to narrowmindedness and intolerance the excessive care which Brahmins take to exclude strangers from their temples and religious ceremonies. For my part, I think that their only motive is to secure themselves from the approach of men who, from the way in which they live, and from the clothes which they wear, are in their eyes in a perpetual state of defilement. In the course of my travels, chance has sometimes brought me to the door, or into the enclosure, of one of their large temples, just when a crowd had assembled to witness some solemn ceremony or procession, and giving way

[1] The law now recognizes a convert's right to his share of the family property.—ED.

[2] In his *Letters on the State of Christianity in India* the Abbé goes into the whole of this question at great length; but he ascribes to Brahminical influence, rather than to Anglo-Indian immorality, the chief cause of 'the impossibility of making real converts to Christianity among the natives of India.'—ED.

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to curiosity, I have stopped to look on at my leisure On such occasions the Brahmins themselves have sometimes invited me to enter their temple, being satisfied as to my manner of living and conduct; an honour which, out of respect to my calling, I always felt bound to decline.

When I had to build or restore a church, it was very often from Brahmins that I obtained the site and the necessary materials; and when I did occasionally meet with opposition in the public discharge of my religious duties, it was never due to Brahmins, but to fanatical sectaries, to religious mendicants, and to other vagabonds who are always wandering about the country.

But if Brahmins cannot with any justice be accused of intolerance in the matter of religion, the same can certainly not be said in regard to their civil usages and customs. On these points they are utterly unreasonable. We have already seen many proofs of this in the preceding chapters, and what I am now about to add will form a fitting sequel. It is part of their principles to avoid and despise strangers. The signs of affection, friendship, and even respect which they sometimes show them are only hypocritical, their motive being entirely that of self-interest. If a European were to come and tell me that he had found amongst the Hindus a really disinterested friend, I should without hesitation predict, while pitying his simplicity and excess of confidence, that sooner or later his pretended friend would deceive and betray him.

Being fully persuaded of the superlative merits of their own manners and customs, the Hindus think those of other people barbarous and detestable, and quite incompatible with real civilization. This ridiculous pride and these absurd prejudices have always been so deeply ingrained in them, that not one of the great dynastic changes that have taken place in India in modern times has been able to effect the smallest change in their mode of thinking and acting. Though they have had to submit to various conquerors who have proved themselves to be their superiors in courage and bravery, yet, in spite of this, they have always considered themselves infinitely their superiors in the matter of civilization.

The Mahomedans, who can tolerate no laws, no customs, and no religion but their own, used every advantage which conquest

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gave them in a vain attempt to force their religion on the people who had succumbed to them almost without resistance. But these same Hindus, who did not dare to complain when they saw their wives, their children, and everything they held most dear carried off by these fierce conquerors, their country devastated by fire and sword, their temples destroyed, their idols demolished; these same Hindus, I say, only displayed some sparks of energy when it became a question of changing their customs for those of their oppressors. Ten centuries of Mahomedan rule, during which time the conquerors have tried alternately cajolery and violence in order to establish their own faith and their own customs amongst the conquered, have not sufficed to shake the steadfast constancy of the native inhabitants. Bribes of dignities and honours, and the fear of annoyance and loss of position, have had but a slight effect on them, and that confined to a few Brahmins. Indeed, the dominant race has had to yield, and has even been forced to adopt some of the religious and civil practices of the conquered people.

It is true that the tyrannical way in which the Mahomedans have always governed this mild and gentle people was not calculated to conciliate them; but perhaps the time is not far distant when the Hindus may see themselves delivered from the iron yoke which has weighed so long upon them. As a rule they care little for the troubles and ills of this life, but it would be difficult for them to forget all the miseries that their inhuman masters have heaped upon them.

The Brahmins in particular cherish an undying hatred against the Mahomedans. The reason of this is that the latter think so lightly of the pretensions of these so-called *gods of the earth*; and, above all, the Mahomedans do not scruple to display hearty contempt for their ceremonies and customs generally. Besides, the haughty Mussulmáns can vie with them in pride and insolence. Yet there is this difference: the arrogance of a Mussulman is based only on the political authority with which he is invested, or on the eminence of the rank that he occupies; whereas the Brahmin's superiority is inherent in himself, and it remains intact, no matter what his condition in life may be. Rich or poor, unfortunate or prosperous, he always goes on the principle engrained in him that he is the

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most noble, the most excellent, and the most perfect of all created beings, that all the rest of mankind are infinitely beneath him, and that there is nothing in the world so sublime or so admirable as his customs and practices.

With regard to any special exhibitions of wisdom, particularly in the province of learning, it would be impossible to persuade Brahmins that there are men outside their caste who are capable of disputing the first place with them. As for the industrial or aesthetic arts, they look upon them as beneath their attention. Probably the gross ignorance of the greater number of the Mahomedan natives of India, who are not even capable of drawing up their own almanac, may have helped to contribute to the good opinion that Brahmins have of themselves; but, on the other hand, if the Mahomedans had any honesty of feeling at all, would they not drop some of this ridiculous boasting, considering the immense and incontestable superiority that the many Europeans who live in this country have over them? The Brahmins, on the other hand, far from accepting this superiority, scornfully repudiate anything that they hear in regard to the ingenious contrivances and useful discoveries which have made such giant strides in Europe of late years. Nothing that has not been discovered by Brahmins, and nothing that is not to be found in their books, would be considered worthy of one moment's attention on their part. You may often meet with men of the Brahmin caste who, from some interested motive or other, have learnt European languages and understand them thoroughly, but you never find in their hands a book written in one of these languages, and no one could ever persuade them that such a book contained anything useful which they did not already know, or which was not to be found in one of their books. No doubt frank and friendly relations between them and educated Europeans may in time overcome this absurd and inexplicable perverseness; but nothing leads one to hope that they will ever seek to establish such relations[1].

How, indeed, could a Brahmin or any other Hindu have any real feelings of friendship or esteem for Europeans so long as the latter continue to eat the flesh of the sacred cow, which a Hindu considers a much more heinous offence than eating

[1] The spread of English education during the last sixty years has certainly brought about an improvement in this direction.—ED.

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human flesh, so long as he sees them with Pariahs as domestic servants, and so long as he knows that they have immoral relations with women of that despised caste? He, it must be remembered, considers himself defiled and obliged to purify himself by bathing if so much as the shadow of one of these Pariahs is thrown across him. How, indeed, could he feel well disposed towards Europeans when he sees them give way without shame or remorse to drunkenness, which to him is the most disgusting of vices, and which, were he to be but once publicly convicted of it, would bring upon him the most serious consequences? How can he respect Europeans when he sees their wives on terms of the most intimate familiarity with their husbands, being equally intemperate, and eating, drinking, laughing, and joking with other men, and, above all, dancing with them: he, in whose presence a wife dare not even sit, and to whom it is inconceivable that any woman, unless she be a concubine or a prostitute, could even think of indulging in such pastimes? How, again, could he mix with Europeans when he sees their clothing, which in shape alone seems to him to savour of indecency by showing too much of the human form, and of which so many articles, such as shoes, boots, gloves, are made from the skins of animals: he, who cannot understand how any decent man could handle, wear, or even touch these remains of dead animals without shuddering with disgust?

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CHAPTER XII

The Morality of Brahmins.—Their Deceit and Dissimulation.—Their Want of Filial Devotion.—Their Incontinence.—Causes of their Depravity.—Unnatural Offences.—Outward Decency.—The Chastity of their Women.—Brahmin Methods of Revenge.—Brahmin Selfishness.

But are the Brahmins, who are so easily shocked at the sins and vices of others—are they themselves exempt from all human weaknesses? Are their morals irreproachable? Oh, far from it! My pen would refuse to describe all their wrong-doings; but, so far as is possible, I will try to give a clear and impartial sketch of them.

I think that we may take as their greatest vices the untrustworthiness, deceit, and double-dealing which I have so often had occasion to mention, and which are common to all Hindus. It is quite impossible to fathom their minds and discover what they really mean; more impossible, indeed, than with any other race. He would indeed be a fool who relied on their promises, protestations, or oaths, if it were to their interest to break them. All the same, I do not think that these vices are innate in them. It must be remembered that they have always been until quite recently under the yoke of masters who had recourse to all sorts of artifices to oppress and despoil them. The timid Hindu could think of no better expedient with which to defend himself than to meet ruse with ruse, dissimulation with dissimulation, and fraud with fraud. The prolonged use of weapons for which excuse may be found in their natural desire to resist the oppression of their rulers, ended by becoming a habit which it is now impossible for them to get rid of. An almost unconquerable propensity to theft is also to be noticed amongst the Hindus. They never let slip an opportunity of stealing, unless they think they are likely to be found out. With them honesty is always secondary to their own personal interest. The

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natural sentiments of filial respect and devotion, the foundation of all other virtues and the first link in the social chain, exercise very little influence over a Brahmin's children. The outward show of love and respect that they occasionally make is purely formal, and means nothing.

Young children will obey their father, because they fear punishment if they do not; but they will overwhelm their mother with abuse, and will insult her grossly, even going so far at times as to strike her. When they grow older they fail to respect even their father, and it often happens that he is obliged to give way to his sons, who have made themselves masters of the house. Strange to say, nowhere are parents fonder of their children than they are in India; but this fondness usually degenerates into weakness. If the children are good, they are extravagantly praised; if they are naughty, their parents show the utmost ingenuity in finding excuses for them. The mild punishments that their naughtiness or disobedience brings down upon them invariably err on the side of leniency. The parents do not dare to whip them or scold them sharply, or even inflict any punishment that they would be likely to feel. The father and mother content themselves with making feeble remonstrances about their bad behaviour, and if these produce no effect, they leave them to grow up in their evil ways. The few sensible parents who show more firmness and severity with their children are met with a show of temper. Sons do not hesitate to resist the parental authority, and threaten to escape it by running away and living elsewhere. This threat rarely fails to produce the desired effect; the parents' severity melts away and they become passive witnesses of the disorderly conduct of their sons, who, encouraged by this first victory, end by becoming absolute masters of the house. One must, however, do them the justice to say that, after having thus gained the mastery over their parents, they take great care of them, as a general rule, and see that they want for nothing in their old age. But I fancy that in acting thus they are moved less by filial affection than by considerations of what the world will say. In the case of such spoilt children, subjected as they are from their earliest youth to influences which prematurely develop the latent germs of passion and vice, the knowledge of evil always comes before the first dawnings of reason. At the time of their lives when, according to the laws of nature, the

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passions should remain unawakened, it is not at all unusual to find children of both sexes familiar with words and actions which are revolting to modesty. The instincts which are excited at an early age by the nudity in which they remain till they are seven or eight years old, the licentious conversation that they are always hearing around them, the lewd songs and obscene verses that their parents delight in teaching them as soon as they begin to talk, the disgusting expressions which they learn and use to the delight of those who hear them, and who applaud such expressions as witticisms; these are the foundations on which the young children's education is laid, and such are the earliest impressions which they receive.

Of course it is unnecessary to say that, as they get older, incontinence and all its attendant vices increase at the same time. It really seems as if most of the religious and civil institutions of India were only invented for the purpose of awakening and exciting passions towards which they have already such a strong natural tendency. The shameless stories about their deities, the frequent recurrence of special feast-days which are celebrated everywhere, the allegorical meaning of so many of their everyday customs and usages, the public and private buildings which are to be met with everywhere bearing on their walls some disgusting obscenity, the many religious services in which the principal part is played by prostitutes, who often make even the temples themselves the scenes of their abominable debauchery; all these things seem to be calculated to excite the lewd imagination of the inhabitants of this tropical country and give them a strong impetus towards libertinism.

In order to prevent the consequences of this precocious sensuality, parents must hasten to marry their children as early as possible. Yet marriage under these circumstances does not always prove a very powerful restraint. Nothing is more common than for a married man to keep one or more concubines away from his home, in a separate establishment, according as his pecuniary circumstances permit. This state of affairs is particularly common in large towns, where it is so much easier to keep it a secret from the legitimate wife, and thus avoid the domestic quarrels and dissensions which are the natural consequences. Nevertheless, even in the country, the jealousy of a wife is rarely a hindrance to a husband's profligacy. She may

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try in vain to bring him back by remonstrances and threats; in vain she may leave her home and take refuge with her parents. Her faithless husband recalls her and maybe swears to behave better in future. But she is soon deceived again! She soon finds herself deserted once more; and finally she must perforce resign herself to seeing, hearing, and suffering everything without making any further complaint.

And after all, is it surprising that libertinism and all its consequences prevail in a country where the passions have so many incentives and such ample opportunities of satisfaction? Look at the crowd of widows in the prime of life who are forbidden to remarry, and who are only too ready to yield to the temptations by which they are assailed. Modesty and virtue place no restrictions on them; their only fear is that their misconduct may be found out. Consequently, abortion is their invariable resource to prevent such a contingency, and they practise it without the slightest scruple or remorse. There is not a woman amongst them who does not know how to bring it about. This odious crime, so revolting to all natural feeling, is of no importance in the eyes of the Hindus. According to their view, to destroy a being that has never seen the light is a lesser evil than that a woman should be dishonoured. The crimes of these unnatural mothers do not always, however, go unpunished; many of them fall victims to the violent remedies which they employ to get rid of their shame. But should these remedies fail in having the desired effect, and the women be no longer able to conceal their condition, they give out that they are going to make a pilgrimage to Benares, which is a very favourite form of devotion amongst Brahmins of both sexes. Then having chosen a discreet companion in whom they can confide, they start on their journey; but the supposed pilgrimage comes to an end in a neighbouring village, at the house of some relative or friend, who helps them to live in seclusion until such time as the child shall be born. They then hand over the result of their misconduct to any one who will take charge of it, and return to the bosom of their family.

Besides these sources of depravity which are common to all castes, there are a great many others peculiar to the Brahmins. Many of them possess abominable books in which the most filthy and disgusting forms of debauchery are systematically

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described and taught. These books also treat of such matters as the art of giving variety to sensual pleasures, the decoction of beverages calculated to excite the passions, or renew them when exhausted. They also contain recipes for philtres, which are supposed to have the property of inspiring unholy love. The courtesans of the country often have recourse to these potions in the hope of retaining the affections of those whom they have enslaved, mixing them secretly in the food of their victims. I am told that the ingredients of which these potions are composed would inspire the greatest libertine with disgust and horror for his mistress if it ever came to his knowledge.

To have any connexion with a courtesan, or with an unmarried person, is not considered a form of wickedness in the eyes of the Brahmins. These men, who look upon the violation of any trivial custom as a heinous sin, see no harm in the most outrageous and licentious excesses. It was principally for their use that the dancers and prostitutes who are attached to the service of the temples were originally entertained, and they may often be heard to intone the following scandalous line:—

Vesya darisanam punyam papa nasanam!

which means, 'To have intercourse with a prostitute is a virtue which takes away sin[1].'

Adultery on the part of a woman, though it is considered shameful and is condemned in Brahminical law, is punished with much less severity in their caste than in many others. So long as it is kept a secret it is regarded as a matter of very small importance. It is the publicity of it which is the sin. If it becomes known the husbands are the first to contradict any gossip that may be current in order to avoid any scandal or disagreeable consequences.

However, the shame and dishonour which are the inevitable consequences of sins of this nature, and which are also reflected on the families of the culprits, serve as a check to a great many and keep them in the path of virtue. Those who succumb to an irresistible temptation are generally clever enough to invent

[1] The real translation is, 'Looking upon a prostitute,' &c. This line, it may be mentioned, is not a quotation from any book of Hindu religion, but is often quoted falsely as such.—ED.

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expedients to hide their weakness from spiteful eyes. But woe to those who have been so imprudent or so careless as to fail to hide their misdeeds. There is no insult that charitable persons of their own sex will not heap upon them, and if the least quarrel arises amongst them this would be the first thing brought up against them. Their confusion under these circumstances proves a warning to others to be more circumspect, or, at any rate, to save appearances at all costs.

But the depravity of the Hindus does not end here. There are depths of wickedness a thousand times more horrible to which the greater number of them are not ashamed to descend.

In Europe, where the Christian religion has inspired a salutary horror for certain unnatural offences, one would find it difficult to believe the stories which show to what lengths these disgusting vices are carried by the greater number of heathens and Mahomedans, to whom they have become a sort of second nature. We all know how greatly the Arabs and their neighbouring tribes are addicted to them. Kaempfer says that in Japan there are public establishments for this purpose which are tolerated by Government; and very much the same thing is done in China.

The facility with which the Hindu can gratify his passions in a natural manner in a country where courtesans abound renders these disgusting practices less common; but it by no means prevents them altogether. In the larger towns in India there are generally houses to be found given over to this odious form of vice. One sometimes meets in the streets the degraded beings who adopt this infamous profession. They dress like women, let their hair grow in the same way, pluck out the hair on their faces, and copy the walk, gestures, manner of speaking, tone of voice, demeanour, and affectations of prostitutes. Other secret crimes are also carried on in India, and especially among the Mahomedans; but decency will not allow me to speak of them. They are the same as those which are mentioned in the Bible (Leviticus xviii and xx), and which brought down such terrible punishments on the inhabitants of Canaan who had been guilty of them.

Being hardly able to believe in the possibility of such abominable wickedness, I asked a Brahmin one day whether there was any truth in what I had heard. Far from denying

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the stories, he smilingly confirmed them; nor did he appear to be even shocked at such iniquity. Indeed he seemed to be quite amused at the confusion and embarrassment that I felt in asking him such questions. At last I said to him: 'How is it possible for one to believe that such depraved tastes exist, degrading men as they do to a far lower level than the beasts of the field, in a country where the union of the two sexes is so easy?' 'On that point there is no accounting for tastes,' he replied, bursting out into a laugh. Disgusted with this reply, and filled with contempt for the man who was not ashamed to speak thus, I turned on my heel and left him without another word.

From the earliest ages these unnatural offences have been common in the East amongst heathen nations. In the laws that God gave the Israelites, He warns them to be on their guard against these detestable vices, which were known to be very prevalent amongst the inhabitants of the countries they were going to take possession of, and which were one of the chief reasons for their total extermination.

If the Christian religion had done nothing more than render these iniquities revolting and execrable, that alone would be sufficient to ensure our love and respect for it.

It may seem incredible, after what I have just said, when I add that there is no country in the world where greater attention is paid to what may be described as outward propriety. What we call love-making is utterly unknown amongst the Hindus. The playful sallies, the silly jokes, the perpetual compliments, and the eager and unlimited display of attention in which our youths are so profuse would be looked upon as insults by any Hindu lady, even the least chaste, that is, if they were offered to her in public. Even if a husband indulged in any familiarities with his own wife it would be considered ridiculous and in bad taste. To inquire after a man's wife, too, is an unpardonable breach of good manners; and when one is visiting a friend one must be careful never to speak to the ladies of the house[1].

Thus it is that here below mankind seems incapable of preserving the happy medium. For our part we exceed in one direction by giving way to undue familiarity with persons of the opposite sex; while the Hindus for their part err on the side of

[1] In the case of relatives and intimate friends no such objection is taken.—ED.

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reserve. The extreme susceptibility of the latter in this respect is due to the opinion they hold that no mark of affection between man and woman can be either innocent or disinterested. If a European lady is seen taking a gentleman's arm, even though he may profess the profoundest respect for her, nothing would persuade a Hindu that she was not his mistress.

These strict principles of etiquette are instilled into the mind of a Hindu woman from her early youth, and, owing to the severity with which lapses from them are treated in some castes, indiscretions are far less frequent than one would imagine to be the case, considering how early the licentious habits of Hindu men are formed. Whatever may be said to the contrary, Hindu women are naturally chaste. To cite a few examples of unseemly conduct, a few lapses attributable to human frailty, is no proof of their want of chastity as a body; just as it is no proof to cite the shameless conduct of those poor wretches, prostitutes by birth and profession, who follow the armies and live in concubinage with Europeans. I would even go so far as to say that Hindu women are more virtuous than the women of many other more civilized countries. Their temperament is outwardly calm and equable, and though a passionate fire may smoulder underneath, without the igniting spark it will remain quiescent. Is this dormant coldness of disposition to be attributed to the secluded way in which they are brought up, or to the reserved demeanour that is taught them from their infancy, or to the unbridgeable gulf that is fixed between them and their male relatives, with whom the least familiarity is not permissible; or, what is not very likely, can it be put down to climatic influence? I cannot say. But whoever studies their character and conduct from this particular standpoint as impartially and disinterestedly as I have done, will, I feel sure, be constrained to render the same tribute to their chastity.

Having thus spoken of the special power which sexual passion exercises in India, a power which unfortunately is only too strongly felt in other quarters of the globe, I will now say a few words on two other passions which are equally violent, and to which the Hindu is particularly susceptible, namely, the resentment of injury and the desire for revenge. The Brahmins are particularly rancorous. The bitter feeling caused by an

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injury or affront never leaves them. Feuds are perpetuated in families and become hereditary, and a perfect reconciliation is never effected. Self-interest sometimes brings two enemies together, but they only dissemble for the time being, and never conquer their feeling of hatred. It is not unusual to see a son or a grandson revenging wrongs done fifty years before to father or grandfather. Furthermore such vengeance takes a peculiar form. Duels seem to them foolish, and they rarely have recourse to assassination or violence. Timid and weak-minded as they are, they do not like to commit themselves to bold or murderous devices. Their favourite weapons are spells and enchantments. They think that by reciting maledictory *mantrams*, or calling to their aid the diabolical arts of some wicked magician, they will surely cause their enemy to be attacked by some incurable malady. To get up a quarrel and then overwhelm each other with the grossest insults is a common mode of revenge, and one in which Brahmins excel. But their most perfidious weapon, and one which they are especially clever at using, is slander. Sooner or later, by crooked ways or underhand intrigues, they contrive to deal their enemies some fatal blow by this means.

Murder and suicide occur occasionally amongst the Hindus, though such crimes are regarded by them with greater horror than by any other people. Poison is generally the means employed when a murder is committed. It is usually women who are guilty of suicide. Driven to despair by the ill-treatment of a brutal husband, or by the annoyances of a spiteful mother-in-law, or by any of those domestic worries which are so common in a Hindu household, they lay criminal hands on themselves and destroy the life which has become unbearable.

Intense selfishness is also a common characteristic of a Brahmin. Brought up in the idea that nothing is too good for him, and that he owes nothing in return to any one, he models the whole of his life on this principle. He would unhesitatingly sacrifice the public good, or his country itself, if it served his own interests; and he would stoop to treason, ingratitude, or any deed, however black, if it promoted his own welfare. He makes it a point of duty not only to hold himself aloof from all other human beings, but also to despise and hate from the bottom of his heart every one who happens not to be born of

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the same caste as himself. And further, he thinks himself absolved from any feelings of gratitude, pity, or consideration towards them. If he occasionally shows any kindliness, it is only to some one of his own caste. As for the rest of mankind, he has been taught from his earliest youth to look upon them all as infinitely beneath him. According to the principles in which he has been brought up, he ought even to treat them with contempt, hatred, and harshness, as beings created solely to serve him and minister to his wants without there being any necessity for him to make the smallest return. Such are the Brahmins[1]!

[1] It must be admitted that the Abbé paints the Brahmins in darker colours than, as a body, they deserve.—ED.

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CHAPTER XIII

The Outward Appearance of Brahmins and other Hindus.—Their Physical Defects.—Remarks on the *Kakrelaks* or Albinoes, as described by Naturalists, who are not allowed Burial after Death.—Other Hindus to whom the same Honour is denied.—Exhumation of Corpses.—The Feeble Physique of the Hindus.—The same Feebleness and Deterioration to be observed throughout the Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms.—Weakness of the Mental Faculties of Hindus.—The Language of the Brahmins.—Their Costume.—Their Houses.

HAVING given a sketch of the moral character of the Brahmins, I will now say a few words about their physical appearance. Many of the characteristics of this kind that I am to mention do not, however, specially pertain to them, but are common to Hindus of other castes. Faces and figures vary, as they do in every other caste; but there are certain physical deformities common enough in Europe which are much more rarely seen in India. Thus, for instance, one seldom meets persons who are humpbacked or lame, unless they have become so by accident. If a child is born with any bodily defect, it is attributed to the evil influence of two unlucky constellations which must have been in conjunction at the time of birth, or to some eclipse of the sun or moon that took place at that moment. On the other hand, blindness is very common. No doubt the chief cause of this is to be found in the habit that poor people have of going about in nature's garb, with their heads exposed to the burning rays of the sun; and it is doubtless in the hope of preventing, as far as possible, the terrible scourge of ophthalmia that they so frequently anoint their heads with castor oil or oil of sesamum.

The Hindus, like every other race, have certain physical characteristics which are peculiar to themselves. Except for their colour, however, they seem to me to be more like Europeans, especially in their physiognomy, than any other Asiatic race. Generally speaking, they have glossy black hair, narrow fore-

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heads, and dark, or occasionally grey[1], eyes. Their stomachs are flat, and they rarely carry much flesh. Their legs are usually slightly bowed the wrong way and a little crooked, the result no doubt of their habit of squatting on the ground with their legs crossed under them like our tailors. Neither have they any calves, which are considered anything but a beauty. Men who work in the fields or who are always exposed to the sun are quite as black in colour as the inhabitants of Kaffraria or Guinea; but the complexion of those who, like the Brahmins, spend their days under cover, or lead a sedentary life, is many degrees lighter. A very dark Brahmin and a fair Pariah are looked upon as monstrosities. Hence no doubt the proverb 'Beware of a black Brahmin or a fair Pariah!' A Brahmin is generally the colour of brass, or perhaps of weak coffee. This is considered the most correct shade; and the women who are the colour of light gingerbread are most admired. I have seen Brahmins, and particularly Brahmin women, who were not as dark as the inhabitants of Southern Europe. Furthermore the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet of Hindus of both sexes are almost as white as our own[2].

On the mountains and in the dense jungles of the Malabar coast there are some savage tribes who are much lighter in colour. In Coorg there is a tribe known as the *Malai-Kondiaru* who in outward appearance closely resemble Spaniards and Portuguese. The cause of this phenomenon is no doubt due partly to the climatic influences of the country they live in, and partly to their habit of always living in dense forests where the rays of the sun cannot penetrate.

You may sometimes meet a few, but very few, individuals whose skin is even fairer than that of a European, and with hair of the same colour. Of course this extreme fairness is unnatural, and makes them very repulsive to look at. In fact, these unfortunate beings are objects of horror to every one, and even their parents desert them. They are looked upon as lepers[3].

[1] They do not at all admire the blue eyes of Europeans. They consider them a deformity, and call them 'cats' eyes.'—DUBOIS.

[2] They share this characteristic with the Negroes.—DUBOIS.

[3] Learned physiologists have thought that these men really are lepers, and

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They are called *Kakrelaks*[1] as a term of reproach. This peculiarity does not prevent some of them from living to a great age. They cannot bear the light, neither can they look fixedly at anything so long as the sun is up. During the day they close their eyelids, leaving only a slit to look through; but as soon as night comes on they open wide their large pink eyes, and are able to go about quite easily, seeing as well as other people.

The question has been raised as to whether these degenerate individuals can produce children like themselves, and afflicted with nyctalopia. Such a child has never come under my observation; but I once baptized the child of a female *Kakrelak*, who owed its birth to a rash European soldier, though this circumstance does not afford any proof on the subject[2].

These unfortunate wretches are denied decent burial after death, and are cast into ditches. This custom arises from a native superstition which does not allo any person who has died while suffering from a cutaneous disease to be buried. The Hindus believe that were this done a drought or some other public calamity would befall the whole country.

that this whiteness is produced by some malady which dries up the skin. They also think that black people would be much more subject to this affliction if it were not for their habit of anointing themselves frequently with oil or some other fatty substance. At the same time it should be observed that these human anomalies are to be met with all over the world. Thus you find the *Bedas* in Ceylon, wild creatures with white skins and red hair. There are *Kakrelaks* in all the American Islands; then again there are the *Dondos* or albinoes of Southern Africa (*Aethiopes albicantes*). Lastly, these colourless people are particularly numerous in the Isthmus of Darien.—DUBOIS.

[1] The *kakrelaks* are horrible insects, disgustingly dirty, which give forth a loathsome odour. They are of the same species as our bugs, but much larger. These unpleasant and destructive insects shun the day and its light. They remain hidden in holes or crannies in walls, and come out at night to devour all the food they can find and to disturb sleepers.—DUBOIS.

[2] This fact disposes at any rate of the opinion which some have held that these people cannot bear children. It remains to be seen whether there would be any issue, supposing both parents were albinoes. The white Negroes of Africa are believed never to be able to produce children; but the *Kakrelaks* in Asia are supposed to be prolific, and their progeny are said to be of the same colour as the rest of the nation. Anyhow, no one has been able to discover for certain if albinoes have been born from other than Negroes or dark-coloured parents; and we may conclude that these ill-favoured children are not a special variety of the human species, any more than are the Cretins in the Canton of Valais.—DUBOIS.

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Burial is also refused, at least in several provinces, to persons who die of wounds or eruptive diseases, such as small-pox or measles, &c.[1] Also to those whose bodies have white marks on them; to pregnant women who die before child-birth[2]; and above all to the many who fall victims to tigers. The tragic fate of these last is in a manner consecrated by those heaps of stones which the traveller sometimes comes across in his journeys, and which, on the very spot where they died, cover the remains of those who have perished so deplorably[3].

In consequence of this absurd superstition, when the country has been a long time without rain, the inhabitants think the drought is to be attributed to the fact that some one must have surreptitiously infringed this unwritten law. Accordingly the magistrates give immediate orders that all bodies that have been buried in the course of the year shall be exhumed, and become food for the birds of prey. I myself once had great difficulty in preventing a Christian cemetery being violated and the remains of the dead disturbed in this manner. Fortunately, at the critical moment, rain came down in torrents, and so the profanation of the dead was avoided. Otherwise I should have been forced to yield to the clamour of a senseless mob.

But to return to the subject in hand, which has been rather lost sight of during this long digression.

All Hindus, and particularly Brahmins, have weak constitutions, and in this respect they are greatly inferior to Europeans. They have not the strength, vigour, or activity of the latter. One European workman would, under any circumstances, do at least as much as two natives. This constitutional weakness, which is partly inherent, is greatly increased by the hardships

[1] Brahmins who die of small-pox are burnt in the usual way, at any rate in South India. The Sudras invariably bury such corpses.—ED.

[2] It is usual amongst Brahmins to take the foetus from the body of a dead pregnant woman, and the latter is burned separately.—ED.

[3] The bodies even of criminals and suicides were not deprived of burial by the Jews; yet there are examples in Holy Scripture which bear some resemblance to this Hindu custom. Thus Achan, after he had been stoned, was buried under a heap of stones (Joshua vii. 25, 26), and Absalom's case is mentioned in 2 Samuel xviii. 17. The king of Ai was treated in the same way (Joshua viii. 29). Finally, Jeremiah prophesies that the wicked Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, should have 'the burial of an ass' (Jeremiah xxii. 19).—DUBOIS.

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and privations that they are condemned to bear all their lives.

The climate, which is the chief cause of the degeneration of the human race in these countries, exercises a no less fatal influence in the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Green stuff, roots, and fruits are for the most part insipid and tasteless, and do not possess half the nutritive value of those grown in Europe. A very few may be cited as exceptions to this rule. The vegetable products of India included in our list of groceries are pungent enough to destroy the membrane of one's throat. Again, the indigenous flowers, with two or three exceptions, have no scent. Lastly, the trees and shrubs to be found in the forests or in uncultivated places are generally covered with thorns and prickles. The elephant and tiger are strong and vigorous enough, but all the other animals, whether wild or domesticated, share in the universal debilitation. What we call butcher's meat has very little succulence in it, and there is nothing in the flavour of the game that would tempt the least fastidious European palate. Vainly would one search for a good hare or partridge. One is inclined to think that nature here has reduced the nutritive value of all animals and vegetables in proportion to the weakness of the human beings whose food they are to be.

But as a cruel compensation, nature is prodigal with creatures that are hurtful, and with many things that are useless, to man. The forests and jungles are inhabited by elephants, tigers, and other wild animals which are deadly foes to man and his flocks and herds. The country is overrun with snakes and other deadly reptiles, while birds of prey may be seen everywhere in large numbers. Every kind of irritating, destructive, and abominable insect swarms and multiplies in a manner that is equally surprising and annoying. Even poisonous plants are by no means uncommon, and their hurtful properties show no signs of deterioration.

It is true that the four elements seem to conspire together for the purpose of weakening everything that matures or vegetates in this portion of the globe. The soil itself is generally light, sandy, and wanting in substance; it requires a great deal of skilled labour to make it fertile. The air is almost everywhere unhealthy, damp, and enervating; the water

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in the wells and tanks is usually brackish and unpleasant to the taste: indeed, the excessive heat of the sun dries up everything, animal and vegetable. The mental faculties of the Hindus appear to be as feeble as their physique. I should say that no other nation in the world could boast of as many idiots and imbeciles. There are, of course, very many sensible, capable persons amongst the Hindus, who possess marked abilities and talents, and who by education have developed the gifts with which nature has endowed them; but during the three hundred years or so that Europeans have been established in the country no Hindu, so far as I know, has ever been found to possess really transcendent genius.

Their want of courage almost amounts to absolute cowardice. Neither have they that strength of character which resists temptation and leaves men unshaken by threats or seductive promises, content to pursue the course that reason dictates. Flatter them adroitly and take them on their weak side, and there is nothing you cannot get out of them.

The prudent forethought which prompts men to take heed to their future as well as to their present wants seems almost an unknown quality among the majority of Hindus. They take no thought for the morrow, and all they care about is to gratify their vanity and their extravagant whims for the moment. They are so taken up with the pleasures and enjoyments of the present that they never think of looking beyond to the possible misery and privations that may await them in the future.

This want of forethought is in a great measure responsible for those reverses of fortune which so frequently happen to them, and by which they pass from the greatest wealth and luxury to the bitterest poverty. It is true they bear these sudden transitions from comfort to misery with the most marvellous resignation; but then this resignation is not the outcome of principle or of dignified patience—it is due rather to their apathetic temperament, which makes them incapable of feeling any strong emotion. They enjoy their good fortune mechanically and without thought, and they take their losses with the same calm imperturbability[1].

I prefer to think that the ingratitude with which they are

[1] This imperturbability might more correctly be attributed to the prevailing belief in the doctrine of fatalism.—ED.

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so often and so justly accused may be attributed to this phlegmatic disposition, and not to wilful wrong-headedness. Nowhere is a kindness so soon forgotten as among Hindus. Gratitude—which is a feeling that springs up spontaneously in all true hearts, which is a duty that bare justice prescribes, and which is a natural result of benefactions received—is a virtue to which the Hindu shuts his heart entirely.

But let us leave this picture, which does not represent a very pleasing side of their character, and let us return to the consideration of their physical peculiarities. It is easy to recognize a Brahmin by a sort of swagger and freedom in his gait and behaviour. Unconsciously, and apparently unaffectedly, he shows by his tone and manner the superiority that his birth, rank, and education have given him. Brahmins have also a peculiar way of talking and expressing themselves. They never make use of the common or vulgar expressions of other castes. Their language is generally concise, refined, and elegant; and they enrich their vocabulary with many Sanskrit words. They have also peculiar modes of expression which the Sudras never use; and their conversation is always interspersed with pedantic proverbs and allegories. Their idioms are so numerous and varied, that though you may think you know their language well, it often happens that you cannot understand them when they are talking familiarly amongst themselves. In speaking and writing they make use of endless polite and flattering terms, often very aptly; but they carry the practice *ad nauseam*. Their compliments are always exaggerated and high-flown. They think nothing of placing those whom they wish to flatter above the level of their deities; indeed, that is a very usual beginning to a congratulatory speech.

If the language of the Brahmins is rich in gracious and flattering expressions, it is even more so in terms of abuse and coarse, indecent invective. Though they pride themselves on their courtesy and knowledge of the world, when they lose their tempers they are no better than our lowest rag-pickers; and an incredible quantity of disgusting and obscene language pours from their mouths on such occasions.

Their clothing is of the most simple description. It is as nearly as possible just what it was in the earliest ages. Two pieces of cotton cloth without hem or stitch, one 10 or 12 feet

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long, the other 14 or 16, and 3 or 4 feet wide, are their only garments. With the first piece they cover their shoulders, with the second they gird their loins. Of the latter, one end is passed between their thighs and is tucked behind into the portion which goes round their bodies, while the other end forms a drapery in front, and hangs with a certain careless grace to their feet. Their loin-cloths are generally ornamented with a border of silk of a different colour from the rest of the cloth itself. This costume is very suitable for persons who, like them, are most particular about keeping themselves always in a state of purity and cleanliness, for, as one may imagine, it does not cost much to wash their cloths often. Many have also a kind of large sheet, with which they cover themselves up at night, or when the mornings are cold. Since European piece-goods have been procurable all over the country, those who have been able to afford them have bought cloths of brilliant scarlet, which are a source of great pride and pleasure to them. It appears that formerly the Hindus went about with bare heads, and their bodies naked to the waist; and even at the present day the natives on the Malabar coast go about in this fashion. So also do a great many others who live in the dense forests where the same customs have prevailed from time immemorial, and where no revolutionary changes have penetrated. Nowadays most Hindus wear a turban, an article of dress which they have copied from the Mahomedans. It is made of fine thin muslin, often as much as 60 or 70 feet long, but at most only 2 feet in width. They twist it artistically round their heads, but the manner of arranging it varies in different provinces and with different castes. Men who are in service with either Europeans or Mahomedans wear a long coat of fine muslin or calico, very full in the skirt, and made in a peculiar way. This also is a foreign fashion recently copied from the Mahomedans. Brahmins and Mahomedans may be distinguished from each other by the fact that the former fasten their coats on the left side, and the latter on the right. Both generally wear over this garment a belt, made of some fine material, and wound several times round the waist.

All Brahmins, rich or poor, dress alike; but the rich usually wear finer and more expensive materials.

Most Hindus wear more or less expensive ornaments either

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in the middle or the upper part of the ears. These ornaments vary in size and pattern according to locality and caste. But I shall have occasion to speak of this kind of adornment later on.

The simplicity of their houses equals that of their costume. These are generally thatched with straw and have mud walls, particularly in the country. The houses in the towns are better built; but they are all arranged on the same plan, and are all equally simple. The interior resembles a little cloister, with a gallery round it, while in the centre there is a court of varying size. From this you enter the tiny, dark, windowless rooms, into which light and air can only penetrate by means of a door about 4 feet high by 3 feet wide. These little dens are absolutely uninhabitable during the hot weather. The kitchen is always placed in the furthest and darkest corner of the house, so as to be entirely beyond the reach of strangers' eyes. I have already explained the motive of this arrangement. The hearth is invariably placed on the south-west side, which they call 'the fire-god's quarter,' because the Hindus believe that there this deity resides.

As the men are not allowed to pay visits to the women of the family, who are always occupied with their domestic affairs and remain shut up in a part of the house to which outsiders, as a rule, are not admitted, large open seats or raised platforms are constructed both inside and outside the principal entrance door, on which the men sit cross-legged, while they talk about business, discuss religion, politics, or science, receive visits, and in fact kill time as best they can.

Besides the private houses, one or more public buildings are generally to be found in all villages of any size. These consist usually of a shed or long room, open down the whole length of one side. They are what Europeans call *choultries*, and they correspond to the *caravanserais* of other Eastern nations. These rest-houses, which are usually large and convenient, not only serve as a shelter for travellers, but are also used as council chambers, where the headmen assemble to consider the public affairs of the village, settle law-suits, put an end to quarrels, and pacify disputants. They are also used for the celebration of religious rites in places where there are no temples.

All the villages are built very irregularly, without any plan or

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symmetry. The houses are crowded closely together; the streets are very narrow, and excessively dirty, with the exception of the street in the larger villages where the market is held, which is kept cleaner, and in which a certain amount of order is maintained. A few steps from the entrance door of each house is a large ditch into which all the manure from the stable and the refuse from the house are thrown. During the rains these sewage pits become full of water and form cesspools, which give off the most disgusting effluvia. But this unpleasant arrangement, which is the same in all the villages, does not appear to affect the inhabitants in any way.

All the houses being covered with thatch and crowded together, when a fire breaks out—a by no means rare occurrence—a whole village is often burned down in less than half an hour.

Though in the larger towns the houses are tiled and not thatched, there is no more symmetry in their arrangement than in the villages, and the streets are so narrow that two persons can scarcely walk abreast. In the middle of each street there usually runs a sewer, which receives all the rubbish and filth from the houses. This forms a permanent open drain, and gives off a pestilential smell, which none but a Hindu could endure for a moment.

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CHAPTER XIV

Rules of Etiquette amongst Brahmins and other Hindus.—Modes of Greeting.

It is unnecessary, and it would be tedious, to give a detailed list of the numberless rules governing Hindu etiquette. If I cite a few it will give a general idea of the rest.

Hindus have several ways of greeting each other. In some provinces they put the right hand on the heart; in others they simply stretch it out to the acquaintance they are meeting, for they never greet a person whom they do not know, unless he be of very high rank. When two Hindu acquaintances meet, they generally say a few meaningless words to each other, such as, 'You--So-and-so—you here? That's all right!' 'And I—So-and-so—here I am.' Then each goes on his way.

They have also borrowed the *salaam* from the Mahomedans; but this they never use except to strangers. The *salaam* consists in touching the forehead with the right hand, and bowing at the same time, with more or less emphasis, according to the rank of the person they are greeting. In the case of a person of very high rank they sometimes touch the ground with both hands and then raise them to their foreheads, or else they come close to him and touch his feet three times.

Hindus who do not belong to the Brahmin caste greet Brahmins by performing *namaskara*, which consists in joining both hands, touching the forehead, and then putting them above the head. This mode of salutation, which is only offered to a superior, is accompanied by these two words, '*Saranam, ayya*!' which means 'Respectful greeting, my lord'; upon which the Brahmin extends his right hand, partially open, as if he expects to receive something from the person who is paying him this mark of respect, and gravely answers with this one word, '*Asirvadam*!' which answers to the Latin '*Benefaxit tibi Deus*!'

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or to our 'God bless you!' It is a mysterious compound expression, made up of three words which convey good wishes. Only Brahmins and *gurus* have the right to give the *asirvadam* or to pronounce the sacred word over those who treat them with respect or give them presents. Some persons, when saluting a Brahmin, content themselves with raising their clasped hands as far as their chest.

Another very respectful manner of greeting is to extend both hands towards the feet of him whom you wish to honour, or to seize his knees while you throw yourself at his feet. This is a very common mode of greeting between a son and a father, or between a younger and an elder brother, on meeting after a long separation. The same humble attitude is also adopted when asking for pardon or for a favour; and only when the object is attained does the postulant relax his hold on the feet of the person whom he is addressing.

But of all the modes of salutation the most solemn and the most reverential is the *sashtanga*, or prostration of the six members, of which mention has already been made elsewhere[1]. When a Hindu is about to make a ceremonious visit to members of his family who live at a distance, he makes a halt when he gets near the place and sends some one to warn his relatives that he is coming. The relatives then start at once to fetch him, and conduct him to their home, often with much ceremony, and accompanied by music. It is not customary either to shake hands or to kiss each other on these occasions. A man who publicly kisses a woman, even if she be his wife, commits the grossest breach of social decorum. A brother would not think of taking such a liberty with a sister, or a son with his mother. Only on a visit of condolence do they make a pretence of doing so to the person to whom the visit is paid; and this form of salute, in which the lips do not really touch the face, is only permissible between persons of the same sex.

Women bow respectfully to men without speaking or looking at them. Children salute their parents in the same manner and stand upright before them, with their arms crossed on their chests. Whenever relatives or very great friends meet after

[1] See Chapter III.

[2] It has already been pointed out in a note in a previous chapter that the Abbé is wrong in translating *sashtanga* as 'six members' instead of 'eight members.'—ED.

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a long separation, they clasp each other in their arms and take hold of each other's chin, shedding tears of joy.

Hindus who visit or meet each other after a long absence have, like ourselves, a set of commonplace phrases which they make use of for want of anything better. But in most cases the ideas they express are diametrically opposed to ours. Thus, for instance, if we Europeans were speaking to a friend or acquaintance, we should think he would be pleased if we congratulated him on his appearance of good health, his increased stoutness, or his good complexion, &c. If we think him altered for the worse, we take care not to let him see that we notice it, for fear it might pain him.

A Hindu, on the contrary, when he meets a friend, no matter how strong and well he may be looking, never fails to offer him the following greeting: 'How sadly you have altered since I last saw you! How thin and worn you look! I fear you must be very ill,' and other equally consoling remarks. It would offend a Hindu deeply if you were to say he was looking well on first meeting him. Any one who was so ill advised as to make so indiscreet a remark would certainly be suspected of feeling jealous, envious, and regretful at the signs of health which were the theme of his unfortunate compliments.

In the same way, you must never congratulate a Hindu on his good luck; you must not say that he has pretty children, a lovely house, beautiful gardens, fine flocks and herds, or that everything that he undertakes turns out well, or that he is happy or lucky, &c.; he would be sure to think that envy prompted compliments of this kind. Long ago, before I knew anything about Hindu etiquette, I was walking one day at the edge of a large tank or lake, where some men were fishing with nets. I stood still to watch them, and seeing that they landed a quantity of fish each time the nets were let down, I thought I might congratulate them on their good luck. But my civility had a most unlooked-for result, for these worthy people gathered up their nets and their fish without a word, and looking at me very indignantly, promptly went off, grumbling to each other under their breath: 'What have we done to this Feringhi *guru* that he comes here and is so jealous of us?'

Just as we French and English do, but contrary to the Spanish and Portuguese custom, the Hindus, in quitting an apartment

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with a visitor, always allow him to walk first. The object is to avoid turning one's back upon a guest, and he, in turn, in order not to appear wanting in politeness, walks sideways until both have passed the threshold. When leaving the presence of a prince or any great personage, it is customary, for the same reason, to walk backwards until one is out of his presence; and this is also why a servant, when accompanying his master on foot or on horseback, never walks in front of him.

It is considered good manners in India to blow your nose with your fingers; and there is nothing impolite in audibly getting rid of flatulency. Persons of all ranks, indeed, seem to rather encourage this habit, as according to them it is a sure sign of a good digestion. It is certainly an original, if somewhat disgusting spectacle to a European, to see a large number of Brahmins coming away from a feast indulging in a sort of competition as to who shall give vent to the loudest eructations, calling out at the same time, with emphatic gravity, '*Narayana*!' as if to thank Vishnu for his favours.

After sneezing a Hindu never fails to exclaim, '*Rama*! *Rama*!' and no doubt there is some superstition attached to this pious ejaculation[1]. Again, when a Brahmin yawns, he snaps his fingers to the right and left to scare away evil spirits and giants.

To tread on any one's foot, even by accident, demands an immediate apology. This is done by stretching out both hands towards the feet of the offended person. A box on the ear is not considered a graver affront than a blow given with the fist, or a kick with the bare foot; but a blow on the head, should it knock off the turban, is a very gross insult. By far the greatest indignity of all, however, is to be struck with one of the shoes or sandals that Hindus wear. Whoever submitted to such an insult without insisting on receiving satisfaction, would be excluded from his caste. The mere threat of such an insult is often sufficient to provoke a criminal prosecution.

[1] One knows that amongst the old heathen nations a sneeze was supposed to contain a great mystery. Old writers mention many facts which prove what superstitious deductions credulous persons drew from it. The custom of uttering a prayer or good wish on behalf of a person who has sneezed has existed from time immemorial. The Greeks said to such a person ζῆθι; the Romans, '*Salve*.' Though with us the fashion of saying, 'May your wishes be granted!' or 'God bless you!' has rather gone out, politeness demands that at least you should make a bow.—DUBOIS.

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It is a mark of respect when women turn their backs on men whom they hold in high esteem. At any rate, they must turn away their faces or cover them with their *saris*. Again, when they leave the house, propriety requires them to proceed on their way without paying any attention to the passers-by; and if they see a man they are expected to bow their heads and look in the opposite direction. There are a good many, however, who are not always quite so modest.

Any one who sees a person of high rank coming towards him, must go off the road, if he is on foot, so as to leave the way perfectly free, and if he is on horseback or in a palanquin he must get down and remain standing until the great person has passed and is some distance off. When speaking to a superior, politeness demands that an inferior should put his right hand before his mouth to prevent any particle of his breath or saliva reaching and defiling him. If an inferior meets a superior out of doors he must take off his shoes before greeting him. A Hindu, moreover, must never enter his own house, much less a stranger's, with leather shoes on his feet.

In several of the Southern Provinces the Sudras are in the habit of taking off the cloth which covers the upper part of their bodies, winding it round their waists, and standing with arms crossed on their chest while speaking to a superior. The women of certain castes do the same in the presence of their husbands, or of any man to whom they wish to show respect. Their rules of propriety oblige them to appear before men stripped to the waist; and to omit to do so would show a great want of good breeding.

When Brahmins are talking to a man of another caste, or to a European from whom they have nothing to hope or to fear, they stand with their hands behind their backs—a position which signifies contempt for their interlocutor, and which they are always very pleased to assume, to show the sense of their own superiority. When they pay a visit, no matter what may be the rank or dignity of their host, they never wait till they are asked to take a seat, but do so the instant they enter the room. People of all castes, when visiting a superior, must wait until they are dismissed before they can take leave.

There are several ceremonious visits which must be paid, such as visits of condolence, visits at *pongul*, and several others

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of which I shall speak later on. The feast of *pongul* and the following days are mostly celebrated by presents which near relatives make to each other, and which consist of new earthen vessels on which certain designs are traced in lime, also ground rice, fruit, sugar, saffron, &c. Such gifts are conveyed with much solemnity and accompanied by instruments of music. These little attentions are indispensable in the case of certain individuals. For instance, a mother must not neglect giving presents to her married daughter; otherwise the mother-in-law would resent the omission to her dying day.

With them letters of condolence on occasions of mourning can never take the place of a visit, as they so often do with us. Some member of the family must go in person to wail and lament, and perform the other ridiculous ceremonies that are customary on such occasions, even though a journey of fifty miles or more has to be made.

When a Hindu visits a person of importance for the first time he must not omit to take presents with him, which he will offer as a mark of respect, and to show that he comes with friendly intentions. It is generally considered a lack of good manners to appear with empty hands before any one of superior position, or from whom a favour is expected. Those whose means do not permit of their offering presents of great value may bring such things as sugar, bananas, cocoanuts, betel, &c.

In conclusion, it must be admitted that the laws of etiquette and social politeness are much more clearly laid down, and much better observed by all classes of Hindus, even by the lowest, than they are by people of corresponding social position in Europe.

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CHAPTER XV

The Ornaments worn by Hindus.—The Different Marks with which they adorn their Bodies.

EVERY Hindu, even including those who have made a profession of penitence and have renounced the world, wears earrings. The *sannyasis* or penitents, who are supposed to have given up the three things which most naturally tend to excite man's cupidity—that is to say, women, honours, and riches—wear copper earrings in token of humility. But generally such ornaments are made of gold, and are of different shapes, though most frequently oval. Occasionally these pendants are so large that one can easily pass one's hand through them. Some are made of copper wire, round which gold wire is so twisted as to cover the copper completely. Those who are fairly well off wear them with a large pearl or precious stone in the centre.

These ear ornaments, which are sometimes of enormous size, are another proof of the Hindu's strong attachment to his old customs. All writers, both sacred and profane, bear witness to the fact that similar ornaments have been worn from time immemorial. On grand occasions, such as marriage feasts, they put four or five pairs into their ears, and at the end or in the centre of each of these is added another small ornament set with some precious stone. In some parts of the country a gold ring is also attached to the cartilage which divides the nostrils. Poor people, Pariahs included, who cannot afford to buy such valuable ornaments, wear some small inexpensive trinket in their ears. But, no matter what their caste or circumstances, fashion decrees that no one shall be without this species of adornment.

Rich Hindus wear round their necks gold chains or strings of pearls with large medallions set with diamonds which reach to their chests; and you often see them wearing gold finger-

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rings set with precious stones of great value. They also frequently wear round their waists a girdle made of gold or silver thread woven with much taste and skill, and carry massive gold bracelets on their arms, which sometimes weigh as much as a pound each. Married men wear silver rings on their toes[1]. Many, again, tie above their elbows little hollow tubes of gold or silver containing magical *mantrams*, which they wear as charms to avert ill luck.

They have many other baubles of the same kind[2]. Even the private parts of the children have their own particular decorations. Little girls wear a gold or silver shield or cod-piece on which is graven some indecent picture; while a boy's ornament, also of gold or silver, is an exact copy of that member which it is meant to decorate.

Then there is the custom of painting the forehead and other parts of the body with different figures and emblems in various colours, a custom unknown elsewhere, but which appears to have been common enough among ancient nations. The simplest of all and the most common is the one called *pottu*, which consists of a small circular mark about an inch in diameter, placed in the centre of the forehead. It is generally yellow, but sometimes red or black in colour, and the paint is mixed with a sweet-smelling paste made by rubbing sandal-wood on a damp stone. Instead of the *pottu*, some paint two or three horizontal lines across their foreheads with the same mixture, and others a perpendicular line from the top of the forehead to the nose. Some Brahmins and some of the Hindus of Northern India apply this paste to their cheeks rather effectively. Others use it to decorate the neck,

[1] Brahmin men never wear such rings.—ED.

[2] The variety and number of ornaments is almost bewildering; but they all have their proper names and shapes. Indian artisans do not need to rack their brains to invent novelties. There are no changing fashions, either in dress or in ornaments. A woman can wear what once belonged to her grandmother, or to one removed very many degrees further back, for the matter of that, either clothes or jewels; and this without any incongruity, or exciting remark. There is a perpetual recurrence of old patterns, improved, it may be, but the design will be the same. Of course it is in jewels for females that the variety occurs most.—PADFIELD.

It is a common belief among Hindus that there must always be at least a speck of gold on one's person, in order to ensure personal ceremonial purity.—ED.

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breast, belly, and arms with different designs, while others again smear their bodies all over with the mixture.

Vishnavite Brahmins, as well as those of other castes who are particularly devoted to the worship of Vishnu, paint their foreheads with the emblem *namam*[1], which gives their faces a most extraordinary, and sometimes even ferocious appearance. The most enthusiastic devotees of this sect paint the same design on their shoulders, arms, breast, and belly; and the *Bairagis*, a sect who go about stark naked, often draw it on their hinder parts.

The worshippers of Siva cover their foreheads and various parts of their bodies with the ashes of cow-dung, or with ashes taken from the places where the dead are burned[2]. Some of them smear themselves all over from head to foot; others content themselves with smearing broad bars across the arms, chest, and belly.

Many Hindus who do not belong to any sect in particular smear their foreheads with ashes. Brahmins, with the exception of a very few who belong to some special sect, do not follow this custom, though sometimes, after they have performed their morning ablutions, they draw a little horizontal line with ashes across their foreheads.

The Hindus also display on their bodies many other marks and devices of different colours and designs, which vary according to the different castes, sects, and provinces. It would be difficult to explain the origin and meaning of the greater number of these symbols; those who wear them are often themselves ignorant of their meaning. Some, the *pottu* amongst the number, appear to have been invented solely for ornament, but there is no doubt that, as a rule, some superstitious meaning is attached to them. Thus the ashes of cow-dung are used in memory of the long penance of Siva and of several other holy personages, who always covered themselves with these ashes in token of humility.

Anyway, the Hindu code of good breeding requires that the forehead shall be ornamented with a mark of some sort. To keep it quite bare is a sign of mourning. It is also a sign that the daily ablutions have not been performed, that a person is

[1] See Chapter IX.

[2] Ashes taken from burning-grounds are not usually employed nowadays.—Ed.

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still in a state of impurity, or that he is still fasting. If one meets an acquaintance after noon with his forehead still bare, one always asks if it is because he has not yet broken his fast. It would be rude to appear before decent people with no mark whatever on the forehead.

Women attach much less importance than men to this kind of decoration. As a rule, they are satisfied with making the little round *pottu* mark on the forehead in red, yellow, or black, or else a simple horizontal or perpendicular line in red. But they have another kind of decoration of which they are very fond. It consists in painting the face, neck, arms, legs, and every part of the body that is visible with a deep yellow cosmetic of saffron. Brahmin women imagine that they thereby greatly enhance their beauty, since it makes their skin appear less dusky. Love of admiration no doubt has taught them that this paint gives them an additional charm in the eyes of Hindus, but it produces quite the contrary effect on Europeans, who think them hideous and revolting when thus besmeared.

No doubt all these daubings appear very ridiculous in our eyes, and it is difficult to believe that it can render any one more attractive, at least according to our way of thinking. But amongst the many artificial means of adornment which caprice and fashion have forced upon us there are several which excite just as much ridicule amongst the Hindus. Thus, for instance, in the days when it was the custom to powder the hair, they could not understand how a young man with common sense could bring himself to appear as if he had the white head of an old man. As to wigs, Hindus are absolutely horrified at seeing a European, holding some important position, with his head dressed out in hair which may have been taken from a leper, or a corpse, or at best from a Pariah or prostitute. To defile one's head with anything so unclean and abominable is regarded by the Hindu as most horrible! It would be no great hardship to expose a bald head to free contact with the air in such a warm climate, but were they all doomed to severe colds, nothing would ever persuade the Hindus to adopt the fashion of wearing wigs. And so we laugh at them, and they at us. And this is the way of the world.

'Vae tibi! vae nigrae! dicebat cacabus ollae.'

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CHAPTER XVI

Brahmin Wives.— The Education of Women.— Ceremonies which take place when they arrive at a Marriageable Age, and during Pregnancy.—The Low Estimation in which Women are held in Private Life.— The Respect that is paid to them in Public.— Their Clothing and Ornaments.

THE social condition of the *Brahmanis*, or wives of Brahmins, differs very little from that of the women of other castes, and I shall have little to say about it. This interesting half of the human race, which exercises such enormous power in other parts of the world, and often decides the fate of empires, occupies in India a position hardly better than that of slaves. Their only vocation in life being to minister to man's physical pleasures and wants, they are considered incapable of developing any of those higher mental qualities which would make them more worthy of consideration and also more capable of playing a useful part in life. Their intellect is thought to be of such a very low order, that when a man has done anything particularly foolish or thoughtless his friends say he has no more sense than a woman. And the women themselves, when they are reproved for any serious fault and find it difficult to make a good excuse, always end by saying, 'After all, I am only a woman!' This is always their last word, and one to which there is no possible retort. One of the principal precepts taught in Hindu books, and one that is everywhere recognized as true, is that women should be kept in a state of dependence and subjection all their lives, and under no circumstances should they be allowed to become their own mistresses. A woman must obey her parents as long as she is unmarried, and her husband and mother-in-law afterwards. Even when she becomes a widow she is not free, for her own sons become her masters and have the right to order her about!

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As a natural consequence of these views, female education is altogether neglected. A young girl's mind remains totally uncultivated, though many of them have good abilities. In fact, of what use would learning or accomplishments be to women who are still in such a state of domestic degradation and servitude? All that a Hindu woman need know is how to grind and boil rice and look after her household affairs, which are neither numerous nor difficult to manage.

Courtesans, whose business in life is to dance in the temples and at public ceremonies, and prostitutes are the only women who are allowed to learn to read, sing, or dance. It would be thought a disgrace to a respectable woman to learn to read; and even if she had learnt she would be ashamed to own it. As for dancing, it is left absolutely to courtesans; and even they never dance with men. Respectable women sometimes amuse themselves by singing when they are alone, looking after their household duties, and also on the occasions of weddings or other family festivities, but they would never dare to sing in public or before strangers.

Such feminine occupations as knitting or needlework are quite unknown to them; and moreover any talents that they might develop in this direction would be wasted, as their clothing consists of one long piece of coloured calico, without any join or seam in it, though most of them know how to card and spin cotton, and very few houses are without one or more spinning-wheels[1].

I have already described what takes place when a young girl who has been married in her early childhood, arrives at the age when she is fit to live with her husband (Chapter VI). These festivities are called *the consummation of the marriage.*

The young woman herself cannot appear, because she is, for the first time in her life, in a state of uncleanness, and for several days she is obliged to remain in a separate part of the house. But after she has gone through the usual rites of purification she returns to the family, and numberless other ceremonies are performed over her, amongst others several

[1] Many Hindu women and girls now do needlework of some kind, and it is taught in most of the girls' schools. The old-fashioned mothers-in-law complain that this new departure has proved detrimental to the performance of the more ordinary household duties. —ED.

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which are supposed to counteract the effects of witchcraft or the evil eye. She is then conducted with much pomp to her husband's house.

The Sudras, and even the Pariahs, have grand festivities when their daughters, though still unmarried, arrive at a marriageable age. The event is announced to the public with all the outward show that accompanies the most solemn ceremonies. A *pandal* is erected; *toranams* or strings of mango-leaves are hung in front of the entrance door of the house; feasts are given; much music resounds. In fact, it is a kind of advertisement or invitation to young men in want of a wife.

When a Brahmin's wife becomes pregnant there are endless ceremonies to be performed, some indeed for each separate month. In any caste it would be considered a disgrace to the woman, and in a less degree to her parents, if her first child were born anywhere but under the paternal roof. Her mother accordingly comes and fetches her about the seventh month of her pregnancy, and she is not allowed to return to her own home till her health is entirely re-established. When she departs her mother is supposed to give her a new piece of cotton cloth and some more or less valuable ornaments according to her means and her caste. But in no case would the woman, to whatever caste she might belong, return from her parents' to her husband's house unless her mother-in-law or some equally near relation came to fetch her. Her husband has to conform to this custom when his wife chooses to leave him and takes refuge under the paternal roof, sometimes for a mere whim, or for some very trifling cause. But in any case, even when the fault is all on her side, the husband must go and fetch her back.

These domestic quarrels and separations occur frequently, and are generally the fault of the mother-in-law, who looks upon her son's wife as a slave that has been bought and paid for. The elder woman, indeed, lives in constant dread of her daughter-in-law obtaining too much ascendency over the husband, and by this means contriving her own emancipation; and accordingly seizes every opportunity of breeding discord between them. This fear is, as a rule, perfectly uncalled for; for the men themselves show very little inclination to be ruled by their wives, and condescend to very little of what we call conjugal tenderness in their relations with them.

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The women, on the other hand, are so thoroughly accustomed to harsh and domineering treatment from their husbands that they would be quite annoyed if the husbands adopted a more familiar tone. I once knew a native lady who complained bitterly that her husband sometimes affected to be very devoted to her in public and allowed himself such little familiarities as are looked upon by us as marks of affection. 'Such behaviour,' said she, 'covers me with shame and confusion. I dare not show myself anywhere. Did any one ever see such bad manners amongst people of our caste? Has he become a Feringhi (European), and does he take me for one of their vile women[1]?'

As a rule a husband addresses his wife in terms which show how little he thinks of her. *Servant*, *slave*, &c., and other equally flattering appellations, fall quite naturally from his lips.

A woman, on the other hand, never addresses her husband except in terms of the greatest humility. She speaks to him as *my master*, *my lord*, and even sometimes *my god*. In her awe of him she does not venture to call him by his name; and should she forget herself in this way in a moment of anger, she would be thought a very low class of person, and would lay herself open to personal chastisement from her offended spouse. She must be just as particular in speaking of him to any one else: indeed, the Hindus are very careful never to put a woman under the necessity of mentioning her husband by name. If by chance a European, who is unacquainted with this point of etiquette, obliges her to do so, he will see her blush and hide her face behind her *sari* and turn away without answering, smiling at the same time with contemptuous pity at such ignorance.

Politeness also forbids you to address a person of higher rank by his name.

But if women enjoy very little consideration in private life, they are in some degree compensated by the respect which is paid to them in public. They do not, it is true, receive those insipid compliments which we have agreed to consider polite; but then, on the other hand, they are safe from the risk of

[1] It may be noted that at marriage feasts, &c., the males and females keep apart; and furthermore the usual personal invitations to such feasts are invariably conveyed to men by men, and to women by women.—ED.

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insult. A Hindu woman can go anywhere alone, even in the most crowded places, and she need never fear the impertinent looks and jokes of idle loungers. This appears to me to be really remarkable in a country where the moral depravity of the inhabitants is carried to such lengths. A house inhabited solely by women is a sanctuary which the most shameless libertine would not dream of violating. To touch a respectable woman even with the end of your finger would be considered highly indecorous, and a man who meets a female acquaintance in the street does not venture to stop and speak to her.

When travelling the men walk in front and the women follow some distance behind. You very rarely see the men address a word to their humble followers. If they come to a river which has to be forded the women tuck up their cloths above the hips, and in this naked state they approach near enough to their travelling companions to permit of the latter stretching out a helping hand behind them to help them to withstand the force of the current; but never would you see any one under these circumstances commit an indiscretion like that which caused Orpheus to lose his Eurydice.

I have often spent the night in one of the common rest-houses, where the men and women lodging there were lying all huddled together anyhow and almost side by side; but I have never known or heard of any one disturbing the tranquillity of the night by indecent act or word. Should any person be so ill-advised as to attempt anything of the sort, the whole room would be up in arms against him in a moment, and prompt chastisement would follow the offence.

A woman's costume consists of a simple piece of cotton cloth, made all in one piece, and woven expressly for the purpose. It is from 30 to 40 feet long, and rather more than 4 feet wide. All sorts and kinds are made, in every shade and at every price, and they always have a border of a contrasting colour. The women wind part of this cloth two or three times round their waists, and it forms a sort of narrow petticoat which falls to the feet in front; it does not come so far down behind, as one of the ends of the cloth is tucked in at the waist after passing between the legs, which are thus left bare as far as, or even above, the calf. This arrangement is peculiar to Brahmin

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women; those of other castes arrange their draperies with more decency and modesty. The other end of the cloth covers the shoulders, head, and chest. Thus the clothing for both sexes is made without seams or sewing—an undeniable convenience, considering how often they have to bathe themselves and wash their garments; for Brahmin women have to observe the same rules of purification as the men, and are equally zealous in the performance of this duty. The custom of women veiling their faces has never been practised in India, though it has been in use among many other Asiatic nations from time immemorial. Here the women always go about with their faces uncovered, and in some parts of the country they also expose the upper half of their bodies [1].

Quiet and retired as is the life of a Hindu woman, it cannot be said to be one of complete and rigorous seclusion. Though all friendly intercourse with men is forbidden to them, still they may talk to those who come to the house as friends or acquaintances without fear of unpleasant consequences. Eunuchs—those deplorable victims of Oriental jealousy—are unknown in India, and the natives never dream of putting the virtue of their women under the care of these miserable beings. They are not to be found even in the palace of a prince, where women are always guarded and waited on by women.

In several parts of India young girls and married women wear a sort of little bodice under their cloth, which covers the breast, shoulders, and arms as far as the elbows; but this, I am told, is a modern innovation, and borrowed from the Mahomedans.

I have reason to believe that the custom of leaving all the upper part of the body uncovered as far as the waist was formerly common to both sexes in the southern parts of India. It still prevails on the Malabar coast, and in the neighbouring provinces.

The custom of tattooing the arms of young girls with indelible designs of figures or flowers is very general. I have already described how this tattooing is done. When their skin is not very dark they generally ornament their faces in the same way, by putting three or four spots on the cheeks and chin.

[1] This custom still prevails in Malabar and Travancore, but it is gradually dying out amongst the educated classes.—ED.

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These marks produce very much the same effect as the black patches which were once the fashion with European ladies. I have already mentioned the habit which the beauties of India and Brahmin ladies observe of painting all the visible parts of their bodies with yellow saffron, and also of darkening their eyelids with antimony.

In order to make their hair more glossy and silky they frequently oil it. They part it exactly in the middle, and then roll it up behind into a sort of chignon, which is fastened behind the left ear. To make this chignon larger they often insert some tow, or else some cotton wool specially prepared for the purpose. Hindu women generally possess beautiful black hair, which is soft and straight. It is very rarely to be seen of any other colour. They are much given to wearing sweet-smelling flowers in their hair, and also ornaments of gold, none of any other metal being permissible, though they sometimes use a silver buckle to fasten the hair together at the back.

Silver ornaments may be worn on the arms, but are more frequently used to decorate the feet and ankles[1]. Some of their anklets are actual fetters, weighing as much as two or three pounds. There are special rings made for each toe, often entirely covering them.

Bracelets are sometimes made hollow, and are more than an inch in diameter. They are of different patterns, according to the country in which they are made and the caste of the person who wears them. They are worn either above the elbow or round the wrist, and are made of gold or silver, as the means of the wearer will allow. Quite poor women wear copper bracelets, and some have more than half their fore-arms covered with glass bangles.

Neck ornaments consist of gold or silver chains, or strings of large gold beads, pearls, or coral. In fact, beads of all kinds and of greater or less value are much in demand. Some women wear necklaces more than an inch wide, set with rubies, emeralds, and other precious stones. But to enumerate all the different kinds of ornaments worn by Hindu ladies would take

[1] It is remarkable that gold ornaments are never worn by Hindus on the feet, the reason being that it is a sacred metal, and would be thereby defiled.—ED.

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a very long time. To give a single instance, I could mention eighteen or twenty different kinds of ornaments that are used for the ears alone.

Even the nose is considered a suitable object for decoration. The right nostril and the division between the two nostrils are sometimes weighted with an ornament that hangs down as far as the under lip. When the wearers are at meals, they are obliged to hold up this pendant with one hand, while feeding themselves with the other. At first this strange ornament, which varies with different castes, has a hideous effect in the eyes of Europeans, but after a time, when one becomes accustomed to it, it gradually seems less unbecoming, and at last one ends by thinking it quite an ornament to the face.

It is no uncommon sight to see a woman decked out in all her jewels drawing water, grinding rice, cooking food, and attending to all the menial domestic occupations, from which even the wives of Brahmins do not consider themselves exempt.

It is, of course, needless to remark that all this extravagant display is very often obtained only at the sacrifice of other more useful and necessary requirements in their homes.

When a girl marries, everything that she receives from her future father-in-law, or that she takes away with her from her old home, is most clearly and distinctly set down, item by item, in a kind of legal document. All these things are her own personal property, which she takes care to claim when she becomes a widow.

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CHAPTER XVII

Rules of Conduct for Married Women.

NOTHING serves so well to illustrate the attitude and behaviour of Hindus towards their wives as the rules of conduct which are prescribed for the latter in the *Padma-purana*, one of their most valued books: rules which I will translate literally. They are reputed to be the work of the famous penitent Vasishta, who recommends their observance by every faithful wife. I cannot say that I altogether approve of them; some of them appear to me absurd; others there are which, from a social point of view, are harmful; all of them evidently have for their object the reduction of this interesting 'better half' of the human race to the lowest state of subjection. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if we find many foolish examples of Hindu superstition, which is a necessary element in every institution of the country. Order and continuity are not so conspicuous as one might desire in the ideas of the great penitent Vasishta; but I give a passage closely following the original, as a specimen of the style of writing that prevails among the Hindus:—

'Give ear to me attentively, great King of Dilipa! I will expound to thee how a wife attached to her husband and devoted to her duties ought to behave.

'There is no other god on earth for a woman than her husband. The most excellent of all the good works that she can do is to seek to please him by manifesting perfect obedience to him. Therein should lie her sole rule of life.

'Be her husband deformed, aged, infirm, offensive in his manners; let him also be choleric, debauched, immoral, a drunkard, a gambler; let him frequent places of ill-repute, live in open sin with other women, have no affection whatever for his home; let him rave like a lunatic; let him live without

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honour; let him be blind, deaf, dumb, or crippled; in a word, let his defects be what they may, let his wickedness be what it may, a wife should always look upon him as her god, should lavish on him all her attention and care, paying no heed whatsoever to his character and giving him no cause whatsoever for displeasure.

'A woman is made to obey at every stage of her existence. As daughter, it is to her father and mother she owes submission; as wife, to her husband, to her father-in-law, and to her mother-in-law; as widow, to her sons. At no period of her life can she consider herself her own mistress.

'She must always be attentive and diligent in all her domestic duties; she should be ever watchful over her temper, never covetous of the goods of others, never quarrelsome with her neighbours, never neglectful of work without her husband's permission, and always calm in her conduct and deportment.

'Should she see anything which she is desirous of possessing, she must not seek to acquire it without the consent of her husband. If her husband receives the visit of a stranger, she shall retire with bent head and shall continue her work without paying the least attention to him. She must concentrate her thoughts on her husband only, and must never look another man in the face. In acting thus, she will win the praise of everybody.

'Should any man make proposals to her, and endeavour to seduce her by offering her rich clothes or jewels of great value, by the gods! let her take good care not to lend an ear to him, let her hasten to flee from him.

'If her husband laugh, she must laugh; if he be sad, she must be sad; if he weep, she must weep; if he ask questions, she must answer. Thus will she give proofs of her good disposition.

'She must take heed not to remark that another man is young, handsome, or well proportioned, and, above all, she must not speak to him. Such modest demeanour will secure for her the reputation of a faithful spouse.

'It shall even be the same with her who, seeing before her the most beautiful gods, shall regard them disdainfully and as though they were not worthy of comparison with her husband.

'A wife must eat only after her husband has had his fill. If

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the latter fast, she shall fast too; if he touch not food, she also shall not touch it; if he be in affliction, she shall be so too; if he be cheerful, she shall share his joy. A good wife should be less devoted to her sons, or to her grandsons, or to her jewels than to her husband. She must, on the death of her husband, allow herself to be burnt alive on the same funeral pyre; then everybody will praise her virtue.

'She cannot lavish too much affection on her father-in-law, her mother-in-law, and her husband; and should she perceive that they are squandering all the family substance in extravagance, she would be wrong to complain and still more wrong to oppose them.

'She should always be ready to perform the various duties of her house, and to perform them diligently.

'Let her bathe every day, rubbing saffron on her body. Let her attire be clean, her eyelids tinged with antimony, and her forehead marked with red pigment. Let her hair be well combed and adorned. Thus shall she be like unto the goddess Lakshmi.

'Before her husband let her words fall softly and sweetly from her mouth; and let her devote herself to pleasing him every day more and more.

'She must be careful to sweep her house every day, to smooth the floor with a layer of cow-dung, and to decorate it with white tracery. She must keep the cooking vessels clean, and must be ready with the meals at the proper hours.

'If her husband be gone out to fetch supplies of wood, leaves, or flowers to perform the *sandhya*, or for any other purpose, she shall watch for the moment of his return and shall go to meet him. She shall go before him into the house, shall hand him a stool to sit down upon, and shall serve up the food prepared to his taste.

'She shall inform him in time of what is wanted in the house, and shall manage with care what he brings home.

'Prudent in her conversation, she must be careful, in conversing with *gurus*, *sannyasis*, strangers, servants, and other persons, to adopt a tone suitable to the position of each.

'In exercising in her house the authority given to her by her husband, she must do so gently and intelligently.

'She must, as in duty bound, use for the expenses of her household all the money with which her husband entrusts her,

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not taking any of it surreptitiously for herself or for her parents, or even, without her husband's permission, for works of charity.

'She must never meddle with the affairs of others, nor lend ear to stories of the good luck or misfortune which has befallen others.

'Never let her yield to anger or malice.

'Let her abstain from all food that is not to her husband's taste. Let her not oil her head when her husband does not oil his own.

'If her husband go away anywhere and ask her to accompany him, let her follow him; if he tell her to remain at home, let her not leave the house during his absence. Until his return she shall not bathe, or anoint her head with oil, or clean her teeth, or pare her nails; she shall eat but once a day, shall not lie down on a bed, or wear new clothes, or adorn her forehead with any of the ordinary marks[1].

'A woman during her menstrual period shall retire for three days to a place apart. During this time, she shall not look at anybody, not even at her children, or at the light of the sun. On the fourth day she shall bathe, observing the proper rites for such occasions which were established before the *Kali-yuga*[2].

'A woman, when she is pregnant, must conform to all the rites prescribed for such occasions. She must then avoid the company of women of doubtful virtue and of those who have lost all their children; she must drive away from her mind all sad thoughts; she must be careful not to gaze at terrifying objects, or to listen to sad stories, or to eat anything indigestible[3]. By observing these rules, she will have beautiful children; by neglecting them she will risk a miscarriage.

'A wife, during the absence of her husband, should strictly conform to his parting counsels. She should be heedless of her attire, and should not devote herself, under the plea of devotion to the gods, to any special acts of piety.

'If a husband keep two wives, the one should not amuse

[1] These restrictions are not observed nowadays.—ED.

[2] The hermit Vasishta here describes these practices. I will explain them in Appendix IV.—DUBOIS.

Nowadays a woman in this condition is not forbidden communication with her children.—ED.

[3] It may be added that a cocoanut is never broken in the presence of a pregnant woman.—ED.

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herself at the expense of the other, be it for good or for evil : neither should the one talk about the beauty or the ugliness of the children of the other. They must live on good terms, and must avoid addressing unpleasant and offensive remarks to each other.

'In the presence of her husband, a wife must not look about her, but must keep her eyes fixed on him, in readines to receive his orders. When he speaks, she must not interrupt him, nor speak to anybody else ; when he calls her, she must leave every thing and run to him

'If he sings, she must be in ecstasy ; if he dances, she must look at him with delight ; if he speaks of learned things, she must listen to him with admiration. In his presence indeed she ought always to be cheerful, and never show signs of sadness or discontent.

'Let her carefully avoid creating domestic squabbles on the subject of her parents or on account of another woman whom her husband may wish to keep, or on account of any unpleasant remark which may have been addressed to her. To leave the house for reasons such as these would expose her to public ridicule, and would give cause for much evil speaking.

'If her husband flies into a passion, threatens her, abuses her grossly, even beats her unjustly, she shall answer him meekly, shall lay hold of his hands, kiss them, and beg his pardon instead of uttering loud cries and running away from the house.

'She must not say to her husband : "Thou hast hurt me, thou hast beaten me unjustly ; I will no more speak to thee ; hereafter the relations between ourselves will be no other than those between a father and his daughter, or a brother and his sister. I shall no more have anything to do with thy affairs ; I will no longer have anything in common with thee." Such words ought never to fall from her lips.

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If any of her relatives or friends invite her to their house on the occasion of some feast or ceremony, she shall not go there without the permission of her husband, and unless accompanied by some elderly woman. She shall remain there for as short a time as possible, and on her return she shall render a faithful account to her husband of all that she has seen or heard; she shall then resume her domestic duties.

'While her husband is absent, she shall sleep with one of her female relatives, and not alone, she shall make constant inquiries after the health of her husband. She shall send constant messages to him to return as soon as possible, and shall offer up prayers to the gods for him.

'Let all her words and actions give public proof that she looks upon her husband as her god. Honoured by everybody, she shall thus enjoy the reputation of a faithful and virtuous spouse.

'If in the event of her husband dying she resolves to die with him, glorious and happy will she be in the world to which her husband will lead her after his death. But whether she dies before or with her husband or whether she survives him, a virtuous wife may rest assured that all sorts of blessings will await her in the other world.

'A wife can enjoy no true happiness unless she attains it through her husband; it is he who gives her children, it is he who provides her with clothes and jewels; it is he who supplies her with flowers, sandalwood, saffron, and all good things.

'It is also through his wife that a husband enjoys the pleasures of this world; that a maxim taught in all our learned books. It is through his wife that he does good works, that he acquires riches and honour, and that he succeeds in his enterprises. A man without a wife is an imperfect being.'

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These rules of conduct may seem extremely severe, yet they are faithfully observed, specially among the Brahmins.

Among certain sects of the Vishnavite Brahmins a peculiar custom exists. A daughter-in-law is never allowed to speak to her mother-in-law. When she wishes to communicate anything to her, she does it by signs ; and when the mother-in-law gives orders to the daughter-in-law, the latter answers by an inclination of the head, thereby indicating that she has understood the orders given her. She, however, at times manages to make up for this enforced silence by having recourse to spirited and expressive gestures ; so much so that her dumb repartees often cause her mother-in-law to boil with rage.

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